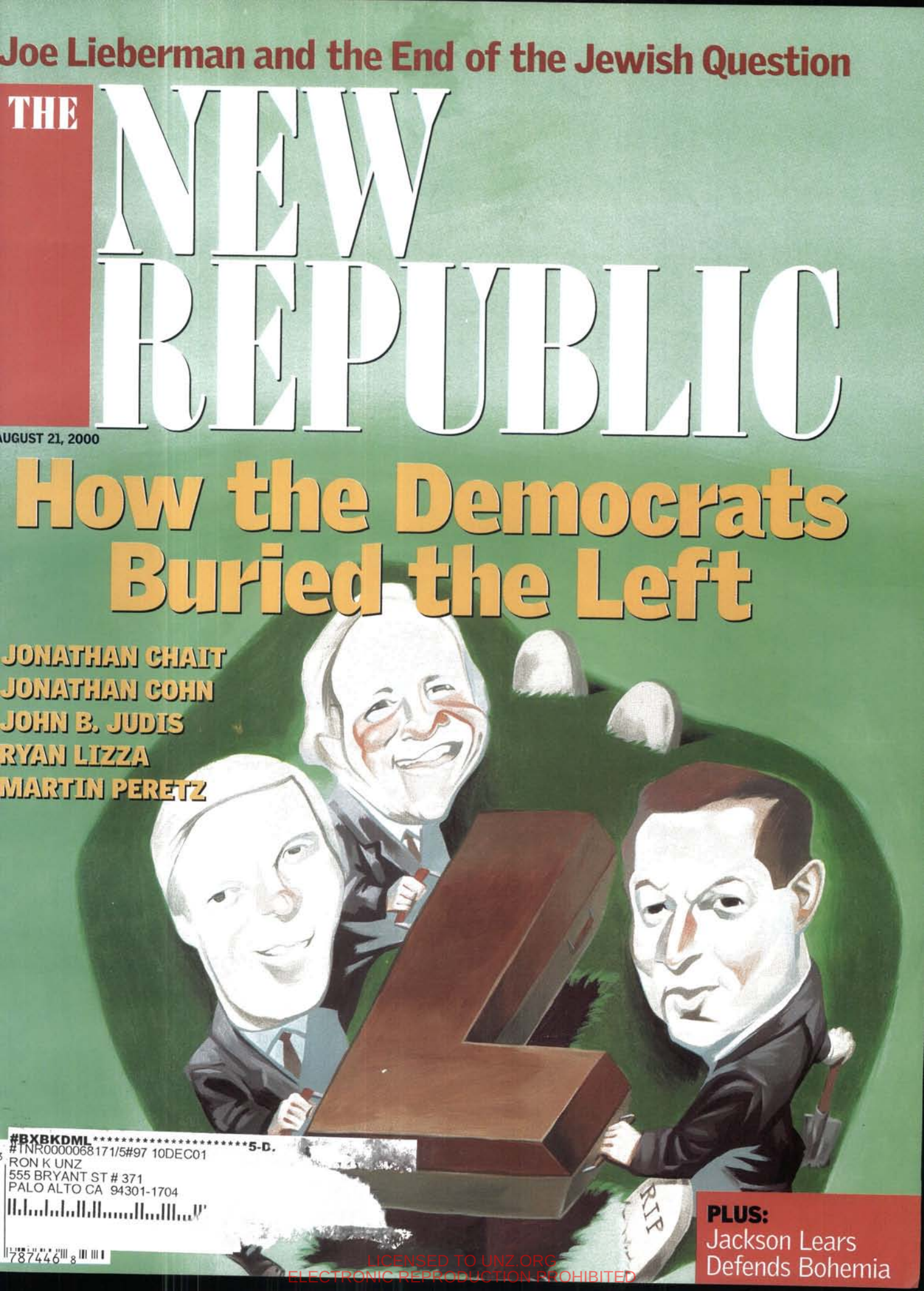
Joe Lieberman and the End of the Jewish Question

THE NEW REPUBLIC

AUGUST 21, 2000

How the Democrats Buried the Left

JONATHAN CHAIT
JONATHAN COHN
JOHN B. JUDIS
RYAN LIZZA
MARTIN PERETZ



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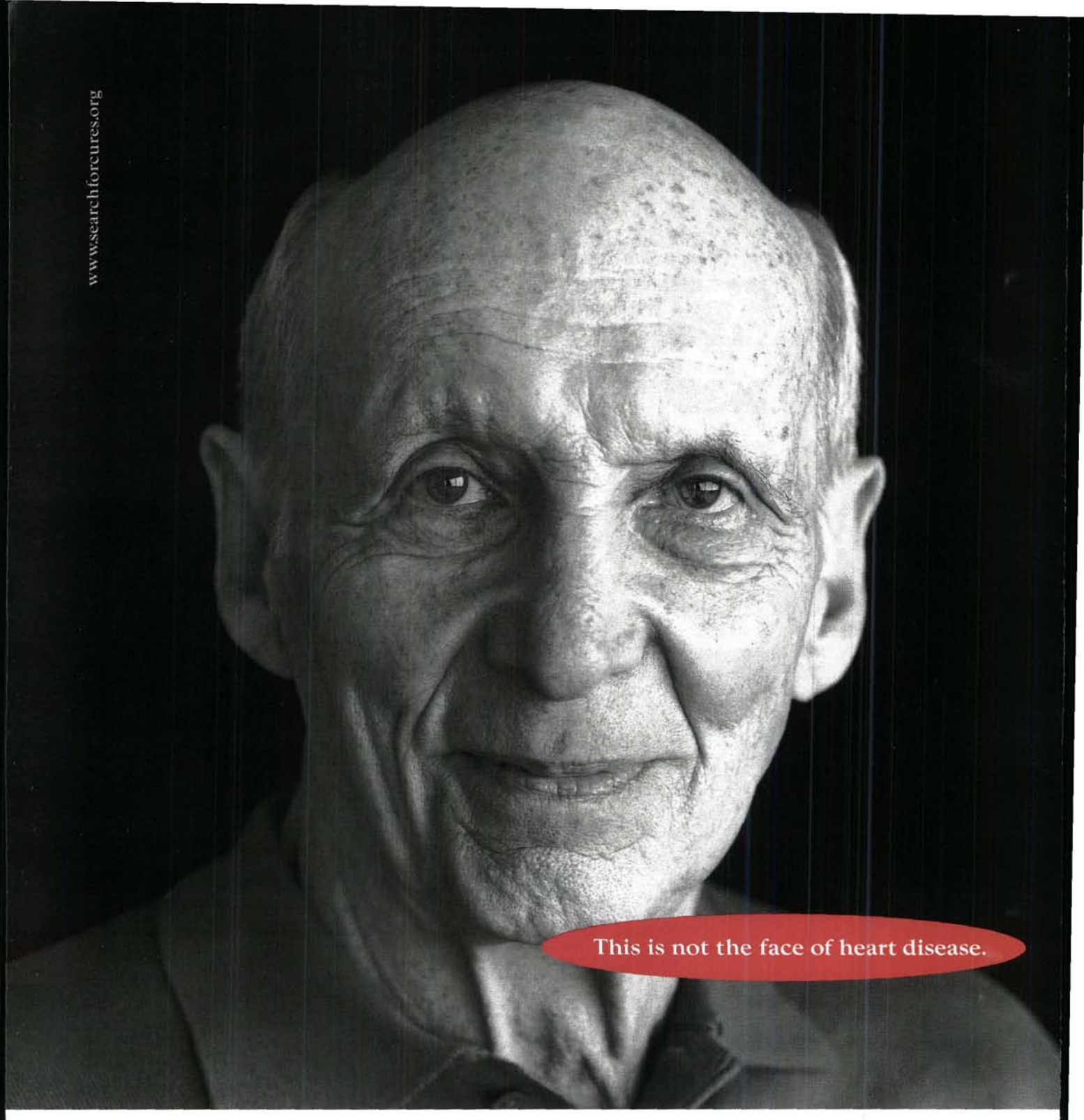

It's the face of Charles Dubin—choir singer, moviegoer and retired TV director. Four years ago, Charles had "a funny feeling in his chest." When Charles heard the words "heart disease" from his doctor, he feared losing his independence and his ability to enjoy life fully. But, thanks to effective medicines, today he's enjoying an active retirement. And, with his new healthier lifestyle, Charles is also doing his part to keep his heart in shape. Heart disease is the leading cause of death among Americans. But in the last 30 years, modern medicines have helped reduce the number of deaths by half. New medicines are also helping to keep more patients out of the hospital by controlling high-risk conditions that lead to heart disease, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Pharmaceutical company researchers are working hard to discover breakthroughs that will help make many illnesses and diseases a thing of the past and bring more patients new hope for a better tomorrow. So, more people like Charles can get on with living and go on with the show.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Shades of Green

TO THE EDITORS:

You are entitled to your opinion but not to your factual misstatements in two recent articles on my presidential campaign.

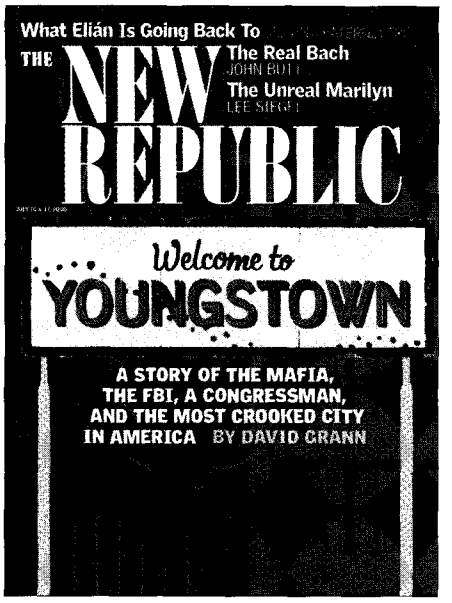
In his article "Seeing Green" (May 29), John B. Judis mistakenly contradicted my statement that business lobbies opposed the women's suffrage movement. I refer him to *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, by Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, which documents the opposition to women's right to vote by railroads, liquor interests, agricultural interests, and other groups.

Judis wrongly claims I said there were 250 million child laborers working in export industries. What I say repeatedly is that the International Labor Organization estimates 250 million children working outside the home to illustrate the magnitude of this problem, not that this number is found entirely in export industries, which do involve several million youngsters.

Judis decries my characterization of the historic opposition of business groups to social-justice movements and the abdication of the Clinton-Gore regulatory agencies by using the tricky method of implying "all" to my statements. He then discredits the statements by identifying exceptions. For example, I discussed the dominant business forces employing slaves in the slave-holding areas; Judis then says Whig businesses did not employ slaves. I also discuss the poor performance of Clinton's regulatory agencies. Dr. Sidney Wolfe, the chief watchdog of the Food and Drug Administration, says that it is the weakest it has been in the past 25 years and that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has never been weaker. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has been turned into a consulting agency to the auto manufacturers. Judis, claiming that there is a brief period of staff growth in one of these agencies, does not negate the underlying accuracy of my statement.

As for blaming the GOP Congress: Who lost Congress to the Republican extremists in 1994, 1996, and 1998? The Clinton-Gore Republicrats lost their identity and the elections. Imagine what LBJ or FDR would have done to the likes of Newt Gingrich. My criticism of Gore for the past eight years is rebutted by Judis recounting Gore's record in Congress before 1992. Wrong period, Mr. Judis.

Sensing from my knowledge of Judis's previous writings that a distorted article was in the making, I offered, at the end of his three-day trip with us, to substantiate in greater detail any of my positions, which in speeches are necessarily abbreviated. Judis just smiled.



Jonathan Chait's article, titled "Slick Ralphie" (July 10 & 17), reflects that he has absolutely no knowledge of the Green Party and did no homework in his pathetic triangulation analogy to Bill Clinton's "statistics." On June 24, by a majority vote, the Green Party platform was adopted in Denver at the Association of State Green Parties Presidential Nominating Convention—see *www.gp.org*. The platform's emphasis on strengthening democratic processes, the environment, labor, and consumer, political, and corporate reforms is right on. It contains none of the statements that Chait insists are in "the party's platform." Perhaps Chait should become familiar with the official platform.

Chait's article takes Judis's sloppiness to new depths. To say I'm not emphasizing environmental issues is not to know what I have been saying during my 50-state campaign this spring. Whether it is solar energy, motor vehicle fuel efficiency, organic agriculture, global warming, ozone depletion, forest destruction, land erosion, workplace toxins, or air and water pollution, the themes are repeated again and again. Moreover, campaign finance reform and universal health care are essential to environmental progress.

Also, Chait is puzzled that a gas-guzzler tax on manufacturers could result in lower fuel costs for motorists. This is accomplished by implementing long-overdue vehicle fuel-efficiency standards, constructing modern public transit, and enforcing antitrust laws. Chait chose to tune out the context of my reply.

I look forward to future opportunities to respond to NEW REPUBLIC articles fueled by a long-standing editorial love affair with Al Gore.

RALPH NADER
Washington, D.C.

JOHN B. JUDIS REPLIES:

Ralph Nader says he offered to "substantiate in greater detail" any of his positions, and that I "smiled" revealingly. The truth is exactly the reverse. I sat down with him at a restaurant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and asked him to substantiate his claims that the Clinton-Gore administration was worse than the Reagan and Bush administrations. He told me whom to talk to and what documents to read, and I did. What I learned contradicted what he said. Sidney Wolfe's study of OSHA, which Nader highlighted in our conversation, did not demonstrate that Clinton and Gore had let OSHA fall into disrepair. It showed that spending had declined during the first two years of the Gingrich-led Congress, but it failed to note—because it came out two years ago—that the Clinton administration has fought successfully to restore and increase OSHA funding since then.

Nader says, "Judis wrongly claims I said there were 250 million child laborers working in export industries." I never said this. I quoted him (from my transcript of his taped speech) saying that there were multinational corporations that "'roam the world ... cutting contracts with companies to take brutalized child labor in the hundreds of millions.'" *Hundreds of millions*. And I pointed out, correctly, that his estimates were off by 2,000 percent or more. Nader claims that I used a "tricky method" to distort what he said by implying that he was making generalizations about businesses and corporations when he was merely referring to some. Baloney. He was using the cheap device of imputing to all what was merely true of some. After claiming that businesses and corporations are "operationally evil," he said, by way of illustration, "Remember, the business community in this country had slaves for three hundred years."

Nader also says that I "contradicted [his] statement that business lobbies opposed the women's suffrage movement." I never said this and would not have written it, because I am perfectly aware that some business lobbies opposed suffrage. I quoted Nader: "'It was the industrialists who didn't want women to have the vote.'" And then I noted that "business leaders were divided on suffrage, as were women and workers" and that "the major national business organizations [the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association

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of Manufacturers] took no position." Nader's assertions about suffrage, slavery, and child labor were part of an effort to demonize corporations before a credulous audience of college students. (One boozy undergrad, seated next to me at the University of Wisconsin's Rathskeller, punctuated Nader's string of indictments against corporate evil with shouts of "String them up!" and "Pokers up their asses!") I think Nader's letter bears out what I wrote about him: that a man known for his precision when he discussed auto safety and air pollution has become the kind of political demagogue he once warned against.

JONATHAN CHAIT REPLIES:
Ralph Nader makes three charges against me. The first is that I fabricated the Green Party platform. As a previously published editorial clarification explained, there are actually two Green parties—the Greens/Green Party USA, and the Association of State Green Parties—both of which claim Nader as their presidential nominee, and which have different platforms. I did not realize this when I wrote the article, and so I inadvertently treated the Greens/Green Party USA platform as the only one. But Nader must know that there are two parties, and his implication that I made up the platform details in my article is dishonest. Second, my article did not say that Nader is not mentioning environmental issues. It says he listed three issues of primary emphasis, and that list did not include environmentalism. Nader does not rebut this fact. And, third, I did not question Nader's contention that he could reduce gas prices. Quite the opposite: I stated that cheaper gas is a strange thing for a Green candidate to favor.

No place like home

TO THE EDITORS:
As someone born in Youngstown and raised just outside the city, I'd like to thank David Grann for acknowledging what those of us from Mahoning County have known for a long time: Youngstown is like no other place ("Crimetown USA," July 10 & 17). The city knows its history, yet it knowingly and willingly dooms itself to repeat it. Grann has it right when he says that Youngstown is proud of its Mafia ties, and especially of hometown hero Representative James Traficant (whom Congress just awarded a $25 million grant to build a convocation and convention center in downtown Youngstown). Is it any wonder that this city, which shows little hope of ever recovering from its perpetual recession, is loath to give up the one thing that still thrives? Youngstown has its own long-running version of *The Godfather.* It could be the one place in America where reading about local politics is never dull. As my mother says, "This is a town run by Fredos, not Michaels."

ANNA WELCH
New York, New York

TO THE EDITORS:
In his treatment of Youngstown, Ohio—which he calls "the most crooked city in America"—David Grann has done this area a tremendous injustice by focusing on our past problems. As community leaders involved in a regional strategic-planning process called "Jobs for Our Valley," we feel compelled to address the misconceptions presented in Grann's article.

To begin with, Grann's article claims that the Mahoning Valley region is "one of the most depressed corners of America." How, then, does he explain the fact that over the past ten years the region has added 20,000 net additional jobs to the economy? That there have never been more jobs in the Youngstown metropolitan area than there are today? That over the past decade more than $6 billion in new construction has occurred in the region? Or that we have received national recognition as a manufacturing center and for having the nation's best economic development partnership initiative, "Grow Mahoning Valley"? Somehow these facts were lost in Grann's rush to paint this community in a negative light.

The same is true about political corruption. Grann's article provides a historic snapshot of what happened in this community. What he fails to recognize is the significant progress made over the past few years. What began as a local investigation into alleged criminal activity has blossomed into a major federal initiative that will cleanse this valley once and for all. Yes, admittedly there are some colorful characters involved and interesting anecdotes to tell. And, no, the job is not yet completed. But whatever influence organized crime may once have had in this community is irrevocably broken; all that remains is to clean up the pieces. What distinguishes this area from others is not simply the violent history you recount in such detail but the thoroughness of our efforts to deal with it.

Though it claims to tell the Youngstown story, Grann's article neglects these facts. We do not believe it is THE NEW REPUBLIC's obligation to "hype" the story of a community, economically devastated 25 years ago, that has fought to recover—and

continued on page 48

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Slacker

In George W. Bush's presidential campaign, everything has a purpose. Every night of the convention that nominated him had the purpose of advertising a purpose: "Opportunity With a Purpose," "Strength and Security With a Purpose," "Prosperity With a Purpose," "President With a Purpose." Accepting the nomination, Bush proclaimed that "the presidency . . . was made for great purposes." Bill Clinton's tragedy lay in "so much promise to no great purpose," Bush lamented, vowing, "We will renew America's purpose."

There's something peculiar about this obsession. A true man of purpose does not speak constantly of having a purpose—much less a series of purposes. "Purpose," like "dignity" or "confidence," is a word invoked compulsively by those who lack it. They know they're supposed to have it, but they don't quite know what it is. They don't understand that mouthing the word is not the same as having the thing to which it refers. Nor do they realize that the more promiscuously they assert it, the less it means. Clinton has this problem with empathy. Bush has it with purpose.

Not since the Great Depression has the Republican Party bestowed its presidential nomination on a man of so little substance. Bush's convention address papered over a lifetime of indifference to serious work and thought. "The Clinton-Gore administration has coasted through prosperity," said the man who coasted through his education and career on family wealth and connections. "An American president must call upon that character" exemplified by "paratroopers on D-Day" and "the civil rights movement," said the man who sat out the Vietnam War and the struggle for civil rights.

Profiles of Bush always pinpoint a moment when he stopped partying and developed a purpose: his admission to business school, his daughters' birth, his religious awakening, his fortieth birthday, his elevation from baseball-team owner to governor. Yet always the breezy thoughtlessness returns. As governor, Bush decided that 30 minutes was too long to spend on a final review of each death-penalty case prior to execution. He cut it to 15 minutes. On the presidential campaign trail, he shrugs off the suggestion that he might learn from his mistakes. "I can't think of anything I'd do differently," he told *The New York Times* on July 29, later adding, "I kind of figure life is going to work its way out somehow."

Finding little to praise in Bush's life, the speakers in Philadelphia turned to his predecessors. His running mate, Dick Cheney, likened him to President Reagan, who showed "how one man's will can set the nation on a new course." General Norman Schwarzkopf, recalling the Persian Gulf war, asked, "Wouldn't it be great for our Armed Forces and for America if we could have another commander-in-chief named George Bush?" Appearing by satellite from the former home of President Eisenhower, Bush compared himself to Ike, citing his "deep sense of duty to our country." But Bush knows nothing of the life-and-death duty his father and Eisenhower shouldered. And his course, unlike Reagan's, is aimless.

Bush's convention organized the nation's "purposes" into three "tests of leadership": education and aid to the poor, taxes and Social Security, and defense. What Bush proposed in each case, however, was to withdraw national leadership and abandon national purpose. His message was: Get yours and get out. Parents whose children attend bad public schools "should get the money to make a different choice," he said. But he neglected, as always, to explain how much money these parents would get and what choices it would bring within their reach. To combat poverty, Bush deputized charities and congregations. "In a responsibility era, each of us has important tasks, work that only we can do," he preached. In other words: Your problem, not mine.

The purpose of the Social Security trust fund is to guarantee decent incomes for the elderly and the disabled. Yet Bush proposed diverting money from it to personal retirement accounts, explaining that these accounts offer "a higher return" if you're among the winners. He didn't explain that these returns are possible largely because the accounts are outside the insurance pool available to the losers. Similarly, taxes are supposed to pay the government's obligations, starting with the national debt, which Bush's father and Reagan quadrupled. Yet Bush proposed to "reduce tax rates for everyone," draining projected surpluses. Shouldn't we pay off the expenses we ran up on the Reagan-Bush credit card first? The Texas governor decided otherwise. "The surplus is the *people's* money," he thundered.

Bush deserted national purpose most clearly in his discussion of the military, blaming Clinton for "a steady erosion of American power. . . . If called on by the commander-in-chief today, two entire divisions of the Army would have to report, 'Not ready for duty, sir.'" Bush was wrong: Those divisions are ready. But they weren't last fall. Why? Because they were keeping the peace in Bosnia and Kosovo. This is what Bush and other Republicans mean when they say Clinton has "squandered" our power and "demanded" too much from the military, sapping its "strength and purpose." They're outraged that he actually asked the Armed Forces to do something. The only purpose Republicans deemed fit for American might was sending a battleship to Philadelphia as a convention prop.

In his speech, Bush reaffirmed his top priority: "When I put my hand on the Bible, I will swear to not only uphold the laws of our land, I will swear to uphold the honor and dignity of the office." Cheney boasted that Bush would accomplish this "on the first hour of the first day." But that's why, as the centerpiece of their campaign, it's preposterous. The presidency is more than a one-hour job. Swearing to uphold its honor—which in Bush's view consists of upholding one's pants—is not, as Bush fatuously asserts, a "high standard." It is the lowest standard imaginable.

This is why the Republicans nominated Bush. You can't hate him the way you hated Reagan or Newt Gingrich, because Reagan and Gingrich stood for something. Bush doesn't. As he boasted in Philadelphia, "I have no stake in the bitter arguments of the last few years." Having freshly concluded his "Renewing America's Purpose" tour, he embarked from the convention on his "Change the Tone" tour. Tone, purpose, leadership, dignity—they have one thing in common. They're meaningless.

Well, almost. They apparently mean something to Bush. His campaign, after all, is really about him: his heart, his compassion, his sense of purpose, "the core of my convictions," "the bosom of my soul." No true conservative would wallow in such sentimental vanity. In his acceptance speech, Bush imagined himself wrestling with Clinton for the conscience of the baby-boomers: "Our generation has a chance to reclaim some essential values, to show we have grown up. . . . We discovered that who we are is more than important than what we have." This is Bush's message: Look at me, I've grown up, I've become responsible, I'm different from Clinton. But, in this clash of narcissists, there is no real difference. Except for one: Clinton has accomplished something.

William Saletan

William Saletan is a senior writer at *Slate.com*.

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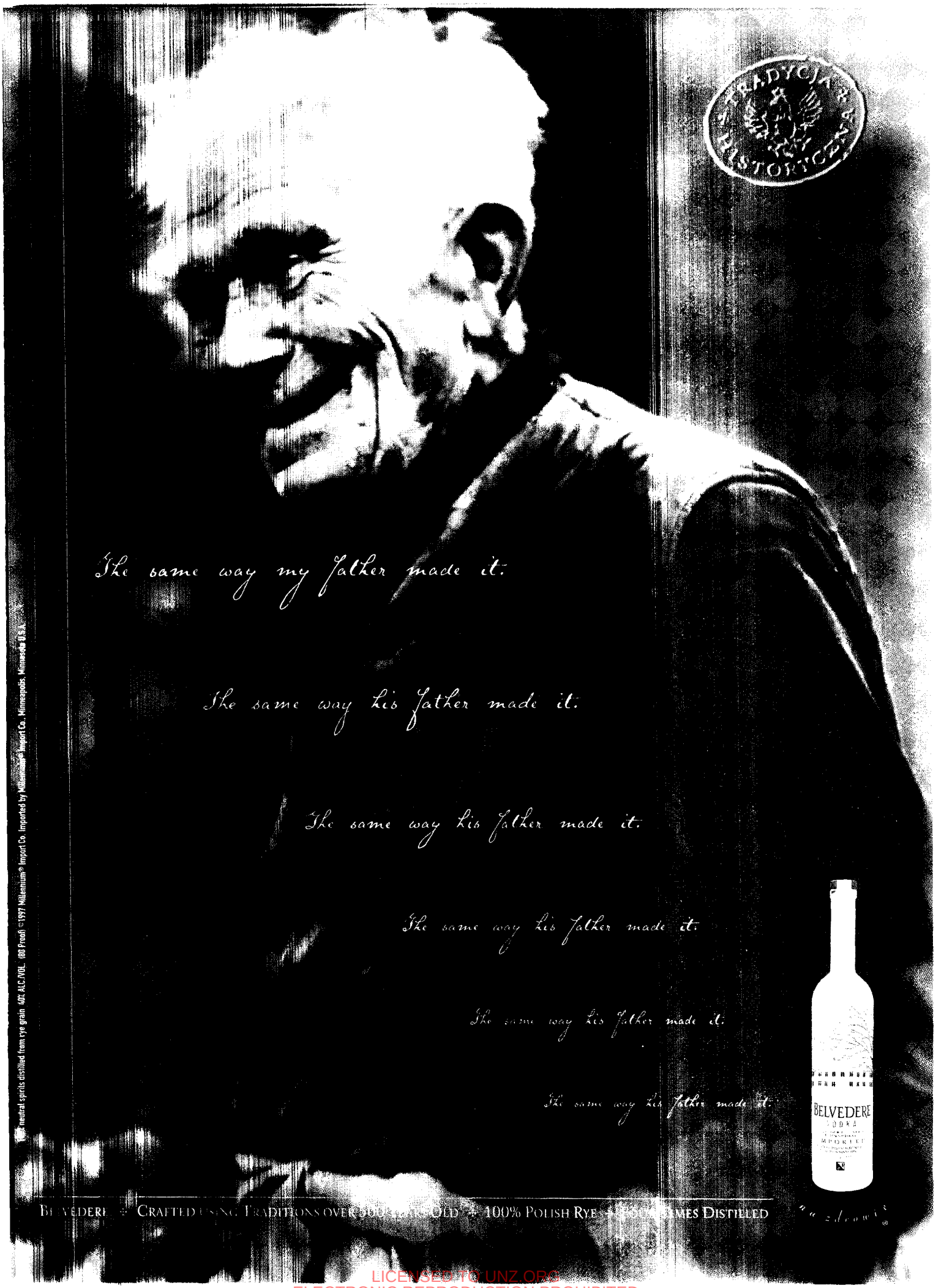
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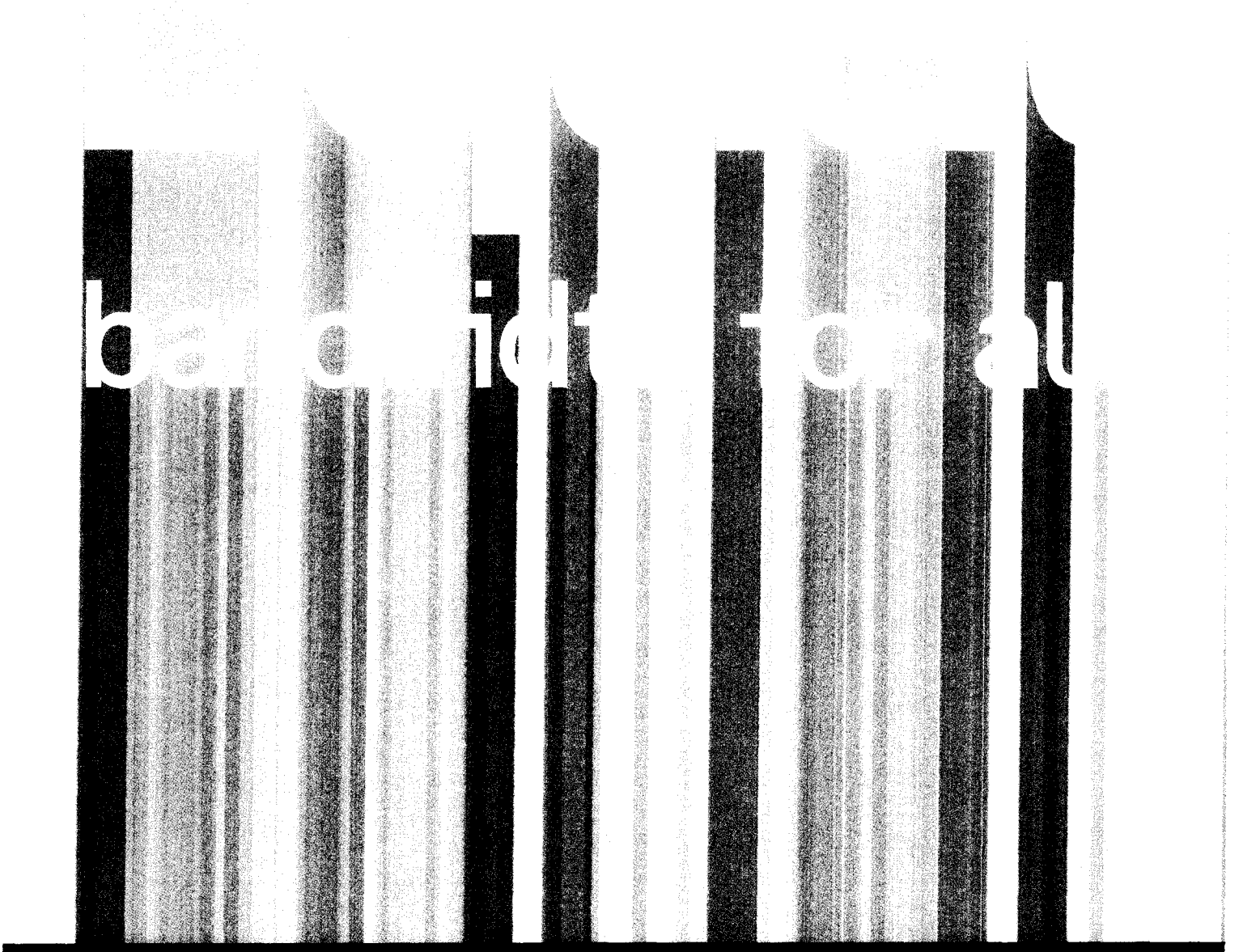

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Lieberman

A JEW! YOU could hear almost the entire country gasp, when it was announced that Al Gore had chosen Joseph Lieberman as his running mate. It was a beautiful gasp, because it was not an expression of anxiety, or of horror. Quite the contrary. Gore's epochal decision appears to have been greeted by almost nothing but delight, except in the camp of the Republicans, who seem suddenly diminished and outwitted by the largeness and the shrewdness of the Democratic ticket. The counterfeit "inclusion" of Philadelphia has been exposed by an act of inclusion so genuine that it raises politics to the level of history. Suddenly the political season has an unexpected magnitude.

The Lieberman nomination did not create a climate of decency in America; it confirmed such a climate. After all, Al Gore picked Joe Lieberman not only for philosophical reasons, but also for practical reasons. We live in a country in which it may be in the *interest* of a presidential candidate to run with a Jew. (And not only with a Jew: Does anyone doubt that the appearance of Colin Powell on the Republican ticket would have conferred upon it a moral and political resonance that it now lacks?) This is not another exercise of "diversity." It is an exercise of the philosophical disposition of America, which is a country that does not demand an erasure of self or an erasure of tradition as a condition of citizenship; that does not recoil before the particular as the enemy of the universal; that assumes the rights of individuals and groups, and does not condescend to grant them; that defeats tribalism with pluralism; that prefers equality to tolerance. The United States does not "tolerate" minorities, it welcomes them, and lifts them up, and expects them to lift up the minorities who come after them. The American ladder is sublimely long, and nobody ever pulls it up behind himself.

For all these reasons, America represents not only a revolution in the history of the world, but also a revolution in the history of the Jews. The freedom and the safety that the Jews found in America are not historical accidents, they are historical achievements. The United States is not just another address that is not Zion. America is itself a kind of solution to the torments of otherness that afflicted and nearly destroyed the Jews in Europe. It is (to use the old Jewish terms) a diaspora that is not an exile. The Lieberman nomination is another American challenge, the most astounding American challenge, to the lachrymosity of the Jewish tradition: this is the place in which Jews, and all other groups whose collective memory teaches them to regard the world with suspicion, must learn to take yes for an answer.

There is anti-Semitism in America, of course; but the threat that anti-Semitism posed in Europe and elsewhere was owed not only to its power but also to its legitimacy, and in America it has no legitimacy. American anti-Semitism is a violation of American principles. So there will be anti-Semitic outbursts in response to the Lieberman nomination, but they will be received with disgust, in the way that racist outbursts are received with disgust. (There will be also more subtle insinuations about double loyalty, to wit that Lieberman will have to "convince [voters] that he puts public policy and law above religion." Those were the words of Jesse Jackson—excuse us, the Reverend Jesse Jackson—in *The Wall Street Journal* on the day of Lieberman's elevation.)

Lieberman is not only a Jew, he is also a believing, practicing Jew. He is a Bible-drenched Democrat. He politely declines the shrimp and regrets that he cannot appear on Saturday night until after sundown. What is so startling about Lieberman's observances, and so edifying about them, is that they appear to have served as the basis for his engagement with the world. His career stands as a rebuke to those Jews—and those Christians—who insist that a religious life requires a withdrawal from society. Lieberman's rule is: different but not separate; authentic but not alone. His Jewish otherness is qualified by his American sameness. Americans may agree or disagree with his views, but he has shattered a stereotype about the confinements of faith.

Lieberman does not deserve anybody's vote merely because he is a Jew, or an Orthodox Jew. His opinions on foreign policy, on school vouchers, on the moral condition of popular culture, must all be debated; and the support that they win must be owed to their merit, not to their provenance. But it would be a great historical mistake, and it would rob us of a peculiarly American pleasure, not to dwell on their provenance for a moment. Gore-Lieberman! Our open society just became a little more open. ■

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NOTEBOOK

INSIDE JOB: During the run-up to Al Gore's veep selection, pundits often noted that North Carolina Senator John Edwards had a special advantage, owing to the presence of several of his former staffers—including senior advisers Bob Shrum and Tad Devine—on the Gore team. Overlooked, however, was that Gore's ultimate choice, Joe Lieberman, had a similar crew of inside boosters. Marla Romash, Lieberman's press secretary for his 1988 Senate campaign against Lowell Weicker, went on to serve as a Gore adviser; and, although she left Gore's staff earlier this year, she's stayed in touch. Jim Kennedy, who worked for Lieberman when he was Connecticut attorney general and served as his communications director until 1997, now fills the same post for the vice president. And, most importantly, Gore's media adviser Carter Eskew also worked for Lieberman's 1988 campaign, crafting ads depicting Weicker as a bear sleeping through votes, which helped clinch Lieberman's upset victory. Perhaps the legendary spinmeister helped secure another upset for his old boss: as Eskew told *The Boston Globe* shortly after Lieberman's selection, his support for the Connecticut senator was so well-known that he "didn't have to communicate that to the vice president." In such close quarters, telepathy apparently works just as well.

IS GOOD FOR THE JEWS GOOD FOR THE DCCC?: The day Lieberman was added to the ticket, gushes an official at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, was "a great day for us." DCCC staffers think Lieberman's tzitzit—er, coattails—could swing to the Democrats at least six Jew-heavy congressional districts: Florida's twenty-second, near Miami; Illinois's tenth, in the North Chicago suburbs; Pennsylvania's thirteenth, in the Northwest Philadelphia suburbs; New Jersey's third, in Cherry Hill, and seventh, in the north-central part of the state; and New York's second, in central Long Island. Alas, they're probably wrong. According to most polling data, between 80 and 90 percent of Jews already vote Democratic. What's more, Jewish turnout is already higher than any other American demographic group's, so there's not much room for a boost in turnout. Besides, of the six Democratic candidates whose prospects the DCCC says Lieberman boosts, at least three are Jewish themselves. Consequently, it's hard to imagine that Lieberman's presence on the ticket will make much of a difference. But then again, as Lieberman said last week, "Miracles happen."

A DIFFERENT KIND OF GUN-CONTROL LOOPHOLE: Lieberman's much-touted record on gun control includes votes for the Brady Bill, the assault-weapons ban, and a bill to completely close the gun-show loophole. But the Connecticut senator has deviated from gun-control orthodoxy in the case of one special interest: Colt, the gun manufacturer headquartered in Hartford. Lieberman, it seems, is all for gun control—except when it might create problems for gun makers in his state. Consider how Lieberman couched his opposition to lawsuits filed against gun manufacturers by cities around the country. "I don't think the lawsuits ... are going to be the way to create some real gun control," Lieberman said last year. "But obviously they've had an effect on some of the companies who are defendants, including Colt." Still more telling was Lieberman's 1993 intervention on behalf of Colt's popular Sporter semiautomatic rifle. Colt was concerned that the Sporter would be included on a list of assault weapons the Senate was considering banning, so the gun company asked Lieberman and fellow Connecticut Senator Chris Dodd to intervene. They did, lobbying against its inclusion. Lieberman said he wasn't sure the Sporter qualified as an assault weapon—even though the Connecticut legislature had included it in its assault-weapons ban a year earlier—and wanted to leave the choice of whether to ban the gun to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. After keeping the Sporter out of the assault-weapons bill, Lieberman boasted to *The Hartford Courant*, "If this was banned, Colt was history." Let's hope the Connecticut senator is a little less responsive to his corporate constituents when (and if) he becomes vice president of the entire country.

ANGELS FINALLY TREAD?: The Clinton administration's decision to finally abandon its shameful policy in Sierra Leone is cause to cheer. As TNR readers may recall ("Where Angels Fear to Tread," by Ryan Lizza, July 24), last year the United States—led by Special Envoy to Africa Jesse Jackson, New Jersey Representative Donald Payne, and the feckless State Department Africa bureau—pressed the West African nation's democratically elected government into a "peace accord" with a brutal band of criminals called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). For nine years the RUF had terrorized the people of Sierra Leone, but the accord gave these war criminals blanket amnesty and made their leader, Foday Sankoh, vice president of the country. Since May—when the deal fell apart after the rebels took 500 U.N. peacekeepers hostage—the United States has replaced its immoral policy with no coherent policy whatsoever. But, over the last few weeks, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Richard Holbrooke, realizing that U.N. peacekeeping efforts around the world were being jeopardized by the Sierra Leone debacle, has quietly shoved aside the Africa bureau and set about repairing American policy. First, Holbrooke helped pass a U.N. resolution banning the sale of illicit Sierra Leonean diamonds, which are controlled by the RUF and fund its insurgency. Holbrooke and the State Department are now threatening the RUF's chief sponsor, Liberian President Charles Taylor—whose previous interactions with U.S. diplomats usually consisted of friendly chats with Jackson—with harsh sanctions if he does not cease his support of the rebels. Most importantly, this week the United States announced it will send several hundred soldiers to Nigeria to help train some 5,000 West African troops—who, in turn, will bolster the wobbly U.N. force in Sierra Leone and try to restore control of the country to the democratically elected government. Holbrooke now describes Taylor as "Milosevic in West Africa with diamonds." Let's hope the United States continues treating him as such.

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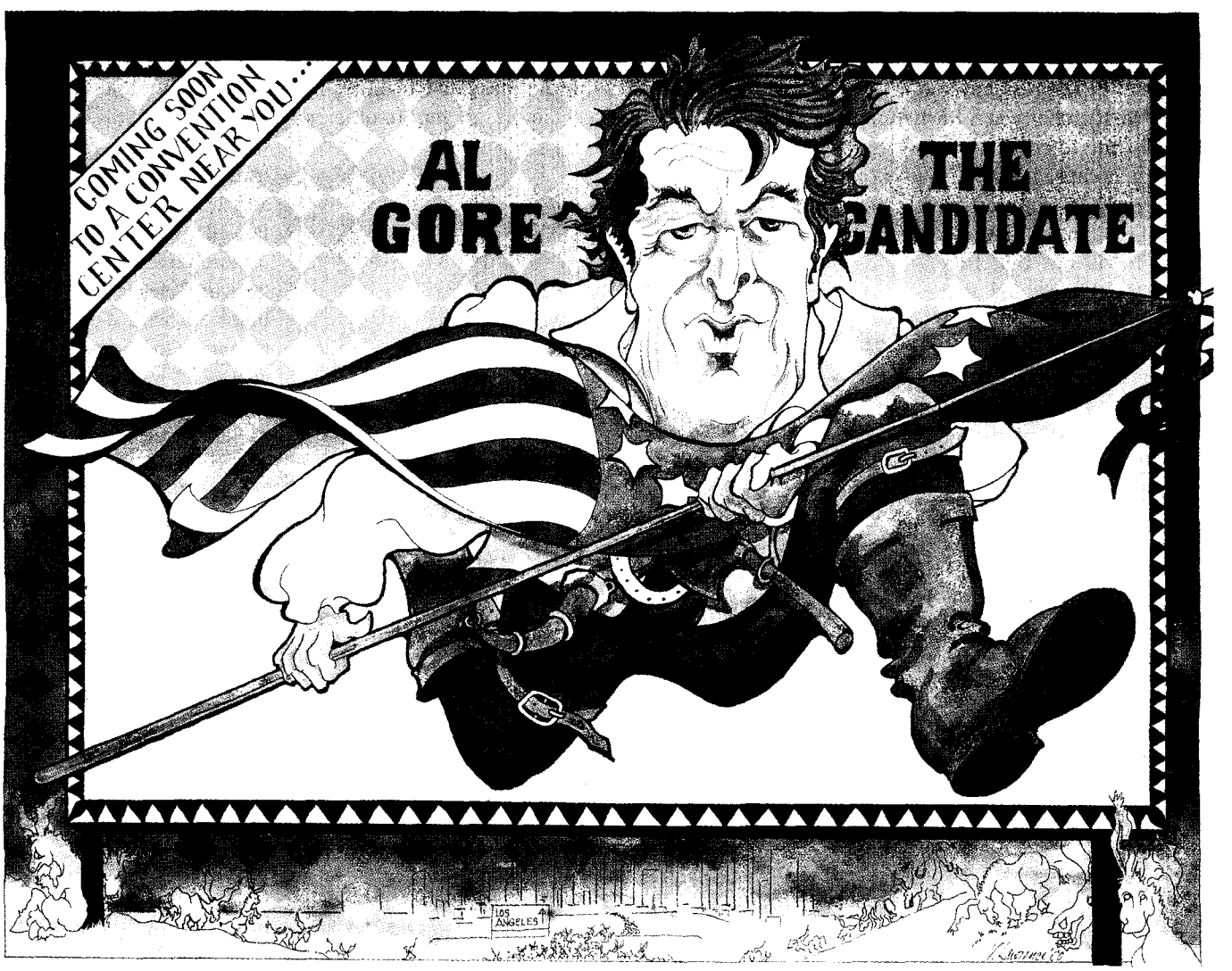
THE BIG THREE GET BIGGER: Earlier this month, Ford and General Motors announced that within five years they plan to raise the fuel efficiency of their sport utility vehicles—Ford by 25 percent and GM by even more. Though the public should be skeptical of such plans—we seem to remember a 1993 White House ceremony at which Detroit's Big Three announced "plans" to develop a family sedan that would record 80 miles per gallon—that didn't stop Ford and GM from reaping a whirlwind of positive press. "This is the kind of one-upmanship we could use more of," gushed *The Washington Post* in an editorial praising GM's promise to outdo Ford. But, the week after its announcement, GM let slip that it will begin mass-marketing the enormous, gluttonous Humvee—a mega-Jeep originally designed for the Army that until recently had been commercially available only in limited editions. GM will now build a civilian Humvee, christened the Hummer, and aims to sell 150,000 per year, two-thirds as many units as the company's Saturn division sells. Unlike fuel-efficient Saturns, though, the Hummer will get about 13 miles per gallon; what's more, it will emit five times the smog-forming compounds that standard cars do and three times the greenhouse gases. Compounding its flaws, the slow, awkward Hummer is so wide it won't fit in a single lane of many roads and must straddle two normal-sized spaces to park. We wonder which we'll see on the road first: the Hummer or that fuel-efficient SUV GM was talking about.

THE POLITICS OF MEANING: "Lieberman's nomination is bad for the country and bad for the Jews."—Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun*, Beliefnet.com, August 8

"I think this is an incredible moment for [American Jews].... It's a great moment. It's a moment of inclusion."—Lerner, CNN's "Inside Politics," same day

TALMUDIC SCHOLARS WATCH: "I think people don't care so much where [Lieberman] goes to church on Sunday, but just that he has the moral values and principles to lead this country."—Louisiana Senator John Breaux, NBC's "Today," August 7 ■

VINT'S WEEK



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Lieberman and the new education consensus.

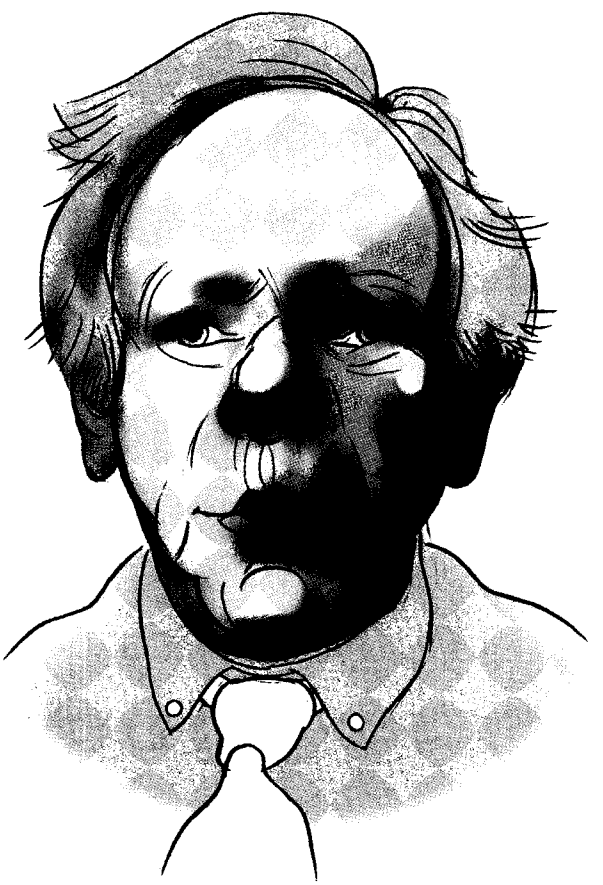
Same Lesson

By Ryan Lizza

It's not often you see a presidential candidate try to claim his opponent's running mate as his own. But that's more or less what George W. Bush has been doing ever since Al Gore tapped Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman as his number two. "Al Gore has chosen a man whose positions are more similar to Governor Bush's," Bush campaign spokesman Ari Fleischer crowed, "than to his own."

And nowhere is this more evident, the Bushies claim, than on education. After all, Lieberman has supported vouchers, which are a central part of Bush's plan to improve America's schools. Gore, on the other hand, is staunchly anti-voucher, eviscerating Bill Bradley during the Democratic primary for backing a 1992 school-choice amendment that Lieberman co-sponsored. What's more, much of the Bush campaign's education agenda is cribbed from a Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) paper that also served as the blueprint for an education bill Lieberman drafted earlier this year. As Will Marshall, PPI's president and a Lieberman confidant, conceded last October when Bush announced his plan, "It's difficult for me to criticize his position, because it's ours."

But what's interesting about Lieberman's views on education is not that they mimic Bush's or, for that matter, Gore's. If anything, it's the reverse. Both presidential candidates have moved in recent months to occupy ground that the Connecticut senator staked out almost a year ago. "With Bush you kind of get accountability, and with Gore you get cash, and Lieberman brings you both, plus teacher quality," says Amy Wilkins of the centrist Education Trust. In fact, on education, Lieberman represents something both politically problematic and governmentally extraordinary: a genuine synthesis to which both presidential candidates could well subscribe.



Lieberman elucidated his views on education most thoroughly in November 1999, when he sponsored a sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), legislation that provides about $13 billion in education funding to the states. Lieberman's bill proposed an accountability system that, for the first time, would have linked federal money to schools' ability to meet specific performance standards. The bill also sought to consolidate 50 different federal education programs.

Although Lieberman's bill didn't include vouchers—which he has backed in the past on a limited, local basis—it nonetheless rankled the teachers' unions and congressional Democrats, who disliked its strict measurements of accountability and its streamlining of federal education programs. Lieberman also drew fire for drafting the bill outside the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, where Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy serves as the Democrats' education point man. The National Education Association even circulated a letter urging House members to oppose similar legislation. In the end, Lieberman's bill went down in flames, receiving just 13 votes.

Although based on the same PPI paper from which Bush crafted his education proposal, Lieberman's bill differed from Bush's plan. While the two proposals take similar views of consolidation and accountability, Bush's plan calls for $13.5 billion in education spending over five years. Lieberman's, on the other hand, called for $35 billion over the same period. What's more, while Bush's money goes mainly to tax credits and vouchers, Lieberman's would have gone to programs designed to improve teacher quality and close the achievement gap. In other words, Lieberman was where W. would be if he listened a little less to Marvin Olasky and a little more to Colin Powell.

Gore's views have been growing closer to Lieberman's as well. During the primary, Gore offered a ten-year, $115 billion education plan that, like Lieberman's, made a huge investment in public schools, devoting money to teacher training, school construction, universal preschool, and smaller class size. What Gore didn't offer was significant accountability standards—largely in deference to the teachers' unions, which generally frown on penalizing failing public schools.

But in May, with voters telling pollsters that Bush had erased the traditional Democratic advantage on education, Gore answered his critics by adding strong accountability measures.

ROB RAGONI

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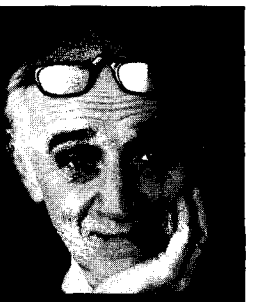

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Bush's aides said they were happy that "Al Gore now agrees with Governor Bush's proposal to hold schools accountable for results." But Gore wasn't stealing Bush's idea; he was seizing the idea Bush stole from Lieberman and the New Democrats. "Gore's plan is the accountability plan that Lieberman was pushing in the Senate," says Andrew Rotherham, who wrote the PPI paper. Ironically, when Lieberman first forwarded his plan to the Gore campaign last fall, it was ignored.

Until November, expect Gore and Bush to magnify their differences on education, and expect Lieberman to say whatever Gore needs him to. Republicans will talk up vouchers and Democrats will pander to the teachers' unions. But the dirty little secret is that many Democrats are sick of the unions' resistance to standards with teeth. And many Republicans have already given up on vouchers, which don't attract much public support. So next year, regardless of who wins the presidency, sensible Democrats and sensible Republicans may wake up from the spin and acknowledge that they don't disagree on very much. And that what they do agree on has already been carefully laid out by Joe Lieberman. ■

Does religiosity defuse anti-Semitism?

Protected Frum

By FRANKLIN FOER

WHY DOES EVERYONE call Al Gore's selection of Joe Lieberman as his running mate "bold"? It's not just because Gore put a Jew on the ticket. It's because he supposedly broke an iron rule of American progress: The pioneer is always hyperassimilated, even deracinated. John F. Kennedy had to publicly announce that he wouldn't take orders from the Vatican. Jackie Robinson had to speak "white" English. Geraldine Ferraro's big issues couldn't be abortion and the ERA. But Lieberman doesn't turn on the lights on the Sabbath, which emphasizes his difference. And so Gore's pick is bold, because he's risking a big anti-Semitic backlash.

Except that he's not. Or, more to the point, the backlash will be smaller—not greater—because Lieberman is conspicuously religious. Ironically, in American public life today, the more traditionally Jewish you are, the less anti-Semitism you're likely to incur.

Historically, American anti-Semitism has been divided into two distinct (if often interwoven) strands. The first, an elite bigotry directed downward toward poor, unassimilated Jewish immigrants, focused on the Jews' clannishness, bad manners, and resistance to modernity. A 1912 tract by the Reverend A.E. Patton, for instance, described Jews as "too filthy to adopt ideas of cleanliness from the start, too bigoted to surrender any racial traditions or to absorb any true Americanism." The second strain of anti-Semitism, by contrast, is populist and envious: Jews as secret power brokers and rootless agents of an atheistic modernity. As Ignatius Donnely complained in his 1894 novel *Caesar's Column*, "the nomadic children of Abraham have fought and schemed their way ... to a power higher than the thrones of Europe."

Since World War II, both strains have grown weaker. But, of the two, the latter has retained more of its strength. As Jews flooded into the middle class—occupying the same universities and jobs as WASPs, shedding the religious strictures that kept them separate, and intermarrying in growing numbers—the anti-Semitism of the country club largely collapsed. But that very success and assimilation actually confirmed working-class resentment of Jews for their perceived secularism, capitalism, rootlessness, and disproportionate influence. In 1964, 29 percent of Americans expressed hard-core anti-Semitic sentiments, according to the Anti-Defamation League. By 1998, that number had plummeted to 12 percent. And that fringe consists of people to whom the intervening decades have not been kind: the uneducated and the downwardly mobile, keen to believe they have been oppressed by a vast conspiracy.

CONSIDER AMERICA'S MOST prominent anti-Semite, Pat Buchanan. Buchanan's are the politics of resentment, economic and cultural. And so, when he takes veiled swipes at Jews, he usually presents them as economic overlords; for instance, he derided the Republican Party as "the political action committee of Goldman Sachs"—the investment bank formerly run by ex-Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin. Or he portrays Jews as cultural overlords; in discussing the Confederate flag, Buchanan calls its opponents media and elite "modernists," borrowing language popularized in anti-Semitic tracts by Henry Ford and Father Coughlin.

Had Gore chosen Rubin as his running mate, he would have played right into the Buchananites' anti-Jewish economic resentment. Had he chosen a cultural liberal like California Senator Barbara Boxer or Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone, Buchanan could have attacked such a candidate, in coded language, as a representative of the secular Hollywood elite. Buchanan could have described Rubin, Boxer, or Wellstone as "rootless," people who through financial or cultural power destroy community and tradition. Which is why the selection of Lieberman leaves him at a loss. Lieberman is a traditionalist, a man deeply tied to an inherited community. Tellingly, much of the anti-Semitism Lieberman's selection has prompted has come from people trying to argue that his religiosity is fake. A sample of postings from the Clinton-hating Free Republic website includes: "If he were a true believer in the faith, rather than someone who uses his religion so as to cloak himself with undeserved righteousness, he would condemn partial-birth abortion"; "Where's his yarmulke?"; and "There is hardly anything kosher about Liberalman."

What is true of Buchanan is also true of evangelicals like Pat Robertson. In his 1991 book *The New World Order*, with its elaborate paranoia about a cabal of Masons and "European" bankers, Robertson singles out "cosmopolitan, liberal,

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secular Jews" who want "unrestricted freedom for smut and pornography and the murder of the unborn," accusing them of participating in the "ongoing attempt to undermine the public strength of Christianity." But here, again, the shoe doesn't fit Lieberman. Far from complaining about his selection, evangelical leaders have waxed effusive. Jerry Falwell declared that Lieberman brings credibility "to anything he touches." In fact, evangelicals have labored in recent years to enlist Orthodox Jews in a kind of popular front against "liberal, secular Jews" and liberal, secular Christians alike. And Lieberman has himself joined in the effort, working with his friend Bill Bennett against sex and violence in the media and serving with Ralph Reed on the board of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

Another pocket of extant American anti-Semitism is the anti-Semitism of the left, the anti-Semitism of Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan and those who see Jews as imperialists abroad and class oppressors at home. But, even here, Lieberman's evident focus on moral issues undermines the equation (pioneered by Marx himself) of Jews with capitalist exploitation. When the head of the Dallas NAACP said last week, in response to Lieberman's selection, that Jews are primarily interested in "money and these kinds of things," he was expressing a hostility that would have spread much more easily had Gore picked Rubin. And it's not just that Lieberman isn't associated with Wall Street. The post-1960s left worships authenticity. Regardless of one's identity, the worst thing a person can do is to betray it and become a kind of Oreo. Even people who dislike Jews will have to admit that Lieberman is true to his heritage.

Two days before the Connecticut senator was selected, DNC Chairman Ed Rendell sparked an uproar by saying, "I don't think anyone can calculate the effect of having a Jew on the ticket." But that statement needs modifying. We may indeed be able to calculate the effect of placing a Jew like Joe Lieberman on a national ticket: it will be small. What would be harder to calculate is the effect of a Jew like Ed Rendell. ■

Don't take Gore's populism too seriously.

Mouth Off

By JONATHAN CHAIT

UNLESS AL GORE radically alters his campaign theme in the next few days—and in this campaign you can never rule that out—the delegates to the Democratic National Convention will hear him describe the election as a single, dramatic choice: "Will we stand up for the people or the powerful?" This is not merely a stray catchphrase; it is the centerpiece of an oratory stocked with the bywords of populism. Where once he assailed the "do-nothing Congress," Gore now speaks of a "do-nothing-for-the-people Congress." And, like all populist defenders of "the people," Gore aims his scorn less at the other party per se than at the special interests for whom they front. "I've stood up to the big drug companies, the big oil companies, the insurance companies, and the HMOs," he thunders, in language that would make Tom Harkin swoon.

How strange, then, that less than two months ago Gore commenced his "Prosperity and Progress" tour accompanied by multimillionaire former Goldman Sachs chairman and ex-Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin. There, the vice president bathed himself in the logic of the bond trader, speaking of "fiscal discipline" and "self-reliance" and promising to eliminate the national debt. He sounded for all the world as if he were running for the board of directors of a Fortune 500 company.

This is the sort of thematic turnabout that has shaped public perception of the Gore campaign. It is what allows the vice president's opponent to accuse him of "running in borrowed clothes" and commentators to conclude that his convictions are constantly in flux. Yet the notion of Gore as ideological cipher is wrong; however inconsistent his rhetoric and however clumsy his stylistic changes, the underlying substance of Gore's candidacy has hardly changed at all. Gore the fiscal conservative and Gore the populist may be competing versions of the vice president's public persona, but they do not represent competing visions of governance. They are, in fact, the same thing.

CONSIDER GORE'S RECENT foray into populism. His verbal salvo against big business was no doubt intended to protect his left flank against Ralph Nader. But his invocation of Nader—and the populist tradition generally—is entirely rhetorical. Gore, unlike Nader, formulates no critique of corporate power and proposes nothing to curtail the privileges of the wealthy. Indeed, his populist oratory has been accompanied by no new policies; he has simply overlaid it upon familiar Democratic proposals. Gore's opposition to the "big drug companies" refers mainly to Democratic legislation to expand coverage of prescription medication, and his campaign against HMOs refers to the patients' bill of rights. His assault upon big oil consists primarily of a promise to investigate price-gouging—which will come to nothing as soon as the current price spike recedes. His proposed regulations on the tobacco and gun industries are established Democratic positions that result from social, not economic, concerns. Gore has simply applied the rhetoric of William Jennings Bryan to the policies of William Jefferson Clinton.

The repetition of the word "big" is also a bit of chicanery, designed to associate Gore with a strain of radical thought to which he does not subscribe. Traditional populism deems corporations evil precisely *because* they are big. The populist bugaboos, therefore, tend to be the dominant economic interests—not small firms, no matter how despicable their behavior. Gore, by contrast, selects his corporate antagonists not according to their size but because of some unpopular characteristic of their enterprise. He articulates no objection to the broad economic phenomena—globalization, downsizing, the growth of homogenized retail outlets such as Star-

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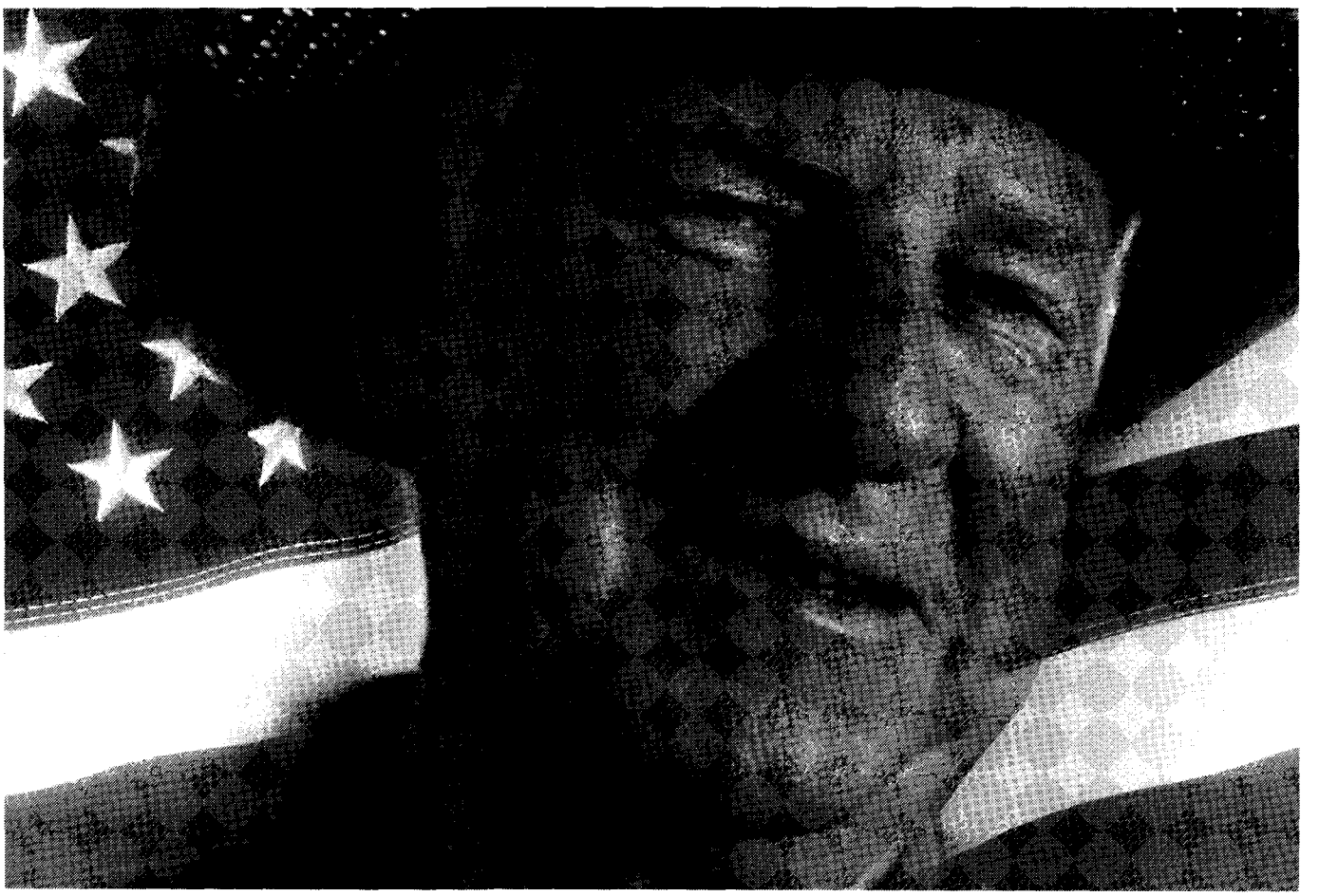

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bucks—that so vex Nader and his followers. His stump speeches do not even mention the Clinton administration's lawsuit against Microsoft—one of the few assaults on corporate power per se for which Gore might take credit.

Gore, after all, is a man who has belonged to the Democratic Leadership Council, the pro-business wing of the party, since its inception, and who has now selected as his running mate the chairman of that organization. It is true that Gore, who inherited some degree of populism from his father, has during his career come into conflict with some business lobbies—for instance, pharmaceutical companies. But any politician who advances even moderate reforms in the pursuit of the public good will occasionally run afoul of some narrowly interested economic entity. Gore's periodic clashes with certain corporate interests no more make him a crusader against big business than his support for expanding foreign trade makes him a crusader against labor.

FROM THIS, ONE might conclude that Gore's populism is entirely phony. Yet that is not exactly the case either. Gore may not be a populist in the Nader mode, but in comparison with the Republican Party he undoubtedly is one. Indeed, the political landscape has changed so radically over the last two decades that it is possible for Gore to be simultaneously the candidate of the bond trader and the candidate of the people.

It is possible because of two momentous intellectual shifts among the economic intelligentsia of the Democratic Party. The first is a greater appreciation of the benefits of fiscal conservatism. When the Clinton administration set out to make deficit reduction the centerpiece of its domestic program in 1993, it did so with great apprehension and only after a tremendous internal fight. While the Clintonites concluded that they had to reduce the deficit to keep the government from drowning in red ink, they thought doing so would inflict short-term damage on the economy. But the results of the past few years have convinced leading liberals that fiscal conservatism is an almost unmitigated good. Reducing the deficit, or paying down the national debt, frees up capital for corporate investment, making businesses more productive and increasing economic growth. This is now the basic fiscal dogma of the Democratic Party.

But, by itself, this singular focus on fiscal conservatism and economic growth would seem to ignore liberalism's traditional concern for social justice. Which is why liberals have relied on a parallel intellectual shift as well: in the relationship between economic growth and living standards for the poor and middle class. From the mid-'70s through Clinton's first term, wages for workers at the middle and bottom of the income spectrum failed to keep up with inflation. But since 1996 living standards have risen across the board. This means liberals can fulfill their goal of assisting the lower and middle classes without taking further steps to redistribute wealth from rich to poor. Some new government programs may be desirable—Gore proposes, for instance, significant new spending on education and low-income savings accounts—but the primary goal is to maintain economic growth, and, in the current environment, that entails fiscal conservatism.

A precursor to what Gore and the Democratic Party now stand for can be found in a book written in 1987 by Alan Blinder called *Hard Heads, Soft Hearts*. Blinder, who has since served as chairman of Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers and now counsels Gore, sought to establish a new kind of economic centrism for Democrats. He began by noting that the classic conundrum of economics was the trade-off between the competing principles of efficiency and equity. Efficiency refers to the sum total of goods produced. Equity refers to how those goods are distributed. A pure free-market economy would be highly efficient but not very equitable. A socialist economy would be equitable but not efficient. Most economists believe in finding a reasonable middle ground between the two.

Blinder recognized this theoretical trade-off but claimed that many of the practical questions of politics do not actually pit equity against efficiency. The political system is so distorted by ignorance, ideology, and special interests, he argued, that it produces policies that are neither equitable nor efficient. As a result, he suggested, it is possible to promote social justice without sacrificing the efficiency of the market.

THIS SCENARIO DESCRIBES the situation in which the Democrats now find themselves. George W. Bush's decision to devote the entire non-Social Security surplus to a tax cut violates both equity and efficiency. The inequity of a tax cut that provides 37 percent of its benefits to the wealthiest 1 percent of the nation is obvious. Bush's tax cut is also inefficient, because it forfeits all the economic benefits of debt reduction—namely, increasing the pool of savings available for private investment—and, by heating up demand, makes it harder for the Federal Reserve to maintain steady growth. In comparison, the Democratic stance—reserving most of the surplus for debt reduction and devoting the rest to progressive spending—is both more fiscally sound and more just. The continued radicalism of conservative economics has thus defined down what it means to be populist. Populism no longer requires attacking corporate America. To use Gore's terminology, his plan would help both "the people" and "the powerful," whereas his opponent's would help only the latter, and likely at the expense of the former.

You'd think this would make for a winning combination. And, what's more, it's what Gore actually believes. After all, behind closed doors, Gore has been a more steadfast proponent of the Clinton economic strategy than Clinton himself. He lobbied for more aggressive deficit reduction in 1993, and, after the Republicans took control of Congress, he objected vigorously to the regressive tax cuts that backslid on that achievement. He did these things when they offered no evident political gain for him or his administration. Now Gore sits in the rare and fortunate position of having his true convictions match those of the majority. And yet he seems unable to convince the public either that these views are responsible for the nation's current good fortune or even that they are genuinely his. It's no good being a populist if you don't have the people. ■

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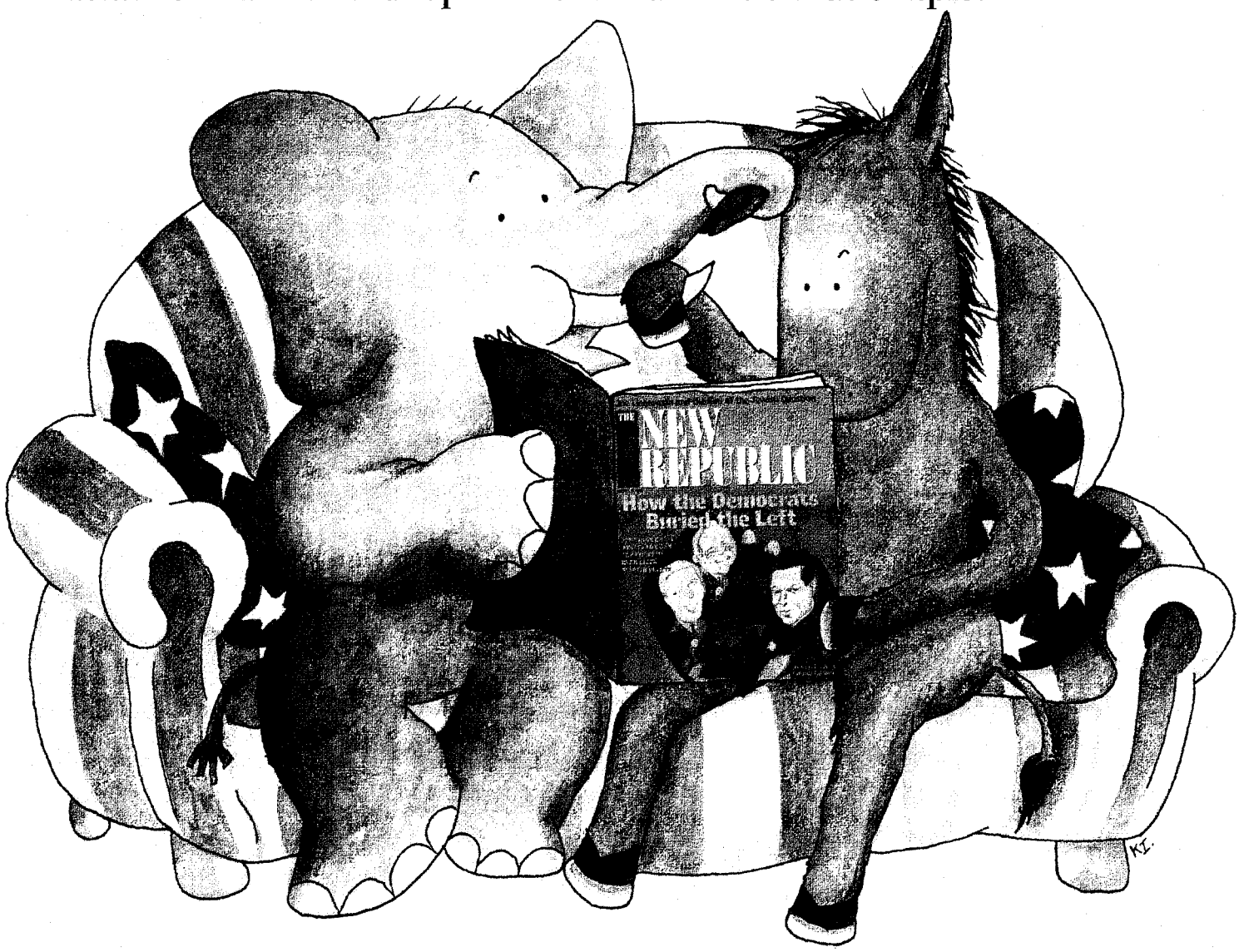

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Gore's labor pains.

Disunion

By JOHN B. JUDIS

CHICAGO

IT'S TWO WEEKS before the Democratic National Convention, and Steve Rosenthal, the AFL-CIO's political director, has just told the federation's executive council how organized labor can elect Al Gore. Now, with his laptop perched on a coffee table outside the Drake Hotel's Grand Ballroom, he's telling me. The AFL-CIO will run some issue ads and help get-out-the-vote efforts among African Americans and non-Cuban Latinos in states like Florida, Rosenthal says, but its primary focus will be the union vote in the Midwestern battleground states. Armed with PowerPoint charts, Rosenthal shows how union turnout could swing state after state. In Michigan, for instance, if nonunion voters favor Bush by 21 percent (the current margin) and union voters favor Gore by 39 percent (about what Clinton got in 1996), Bush wins the state by nine percent. But if union voters turn out in the disproportionately large numbers of 1996 (when they made up 40 percent of the state electorate), then Gore wins Michigan by three percent. The key factor, Rosenthal says, is turnout.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has been laying the groundwork for Rosenthal's strategy for close to a year. Last October, Sweeney persuaded the federation to endorse Gore at its national convention in Los Angeles—the organization's first primary endorsement since 1984. But the problem is that since then, divisions between the old-style manufacturing unions that once formed the AFL-CIO's backbone and the service-sector and public-employee unions that have come to dominate in recent years have grown wider—and spilled into the presidential race. Virtually all the federation's member unions will back Gore—James Hoffa's Teamsters is the only real question mark—but the support of the industrial unions, which are disenchanted with Gore for backing free trade, looks decidedly tepid. And tepid, Rosenthal knows, means low turnout. And low turnout means defeat.

Five years ago, Sweeney became AFL-CIO president with the support of a wide range of private, public, craft, manufacturing, and service-sector unions. But this unanimity concealed a change of guard. Historically, the federation's center of gravity lay with craft unions such as the Teamsters and the Building Trades and industrial unions such as the United Auto Workers (UAW) and United Steelworkers. But Sweeney's ascent reflected a shift in power toward service-sector and public-employee unions like the Service Employees International Union (SEIU, from which Sweeney himself hails), United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). While the industrial unions have spent the past two decades hemorrhaging—the UAW has shrunk from 1.5 million members in 1979 to 750,000 today—the public-employee and service unions have grown steadily and now make up about one-third of the federation's 13 million members. Through Sweeney and his closest collaborator, AFSCME President Gerald McEntee, they now shape the federation's overall direction.

During Sweeney's first term in office, he kept the federation's disparate elements united; they worked together against Republican attempts to weaken labor laws and gut the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Sweeney also won support across the federation for his focus on organizing new members: in 1998, union membership grew for the first time in five years, and in 1999 it grew by 266,000, the largest increase in two decades. But last fall, even as Sweeney was being acclaimed for reviving the labor movement, differences began to emerge over the primary endorsement of Gore.

The AFL-CIO had not endorsed a candidate in a presidential primary since it backed Walter Mondale in 1984, but Sweeney—with the strong support of McEntee, AFT President Sandra Feldman, and Communications Workers of America President Morton Bahr—urged the federation to throw its weight behind Gore rather than former Senator Bill Bradley. Although the rationale was partly political—they argued that by endorsing the vice president when he was struggling, they could gain maximum leverage down the road—it was also heartfelt. Bahr, for instance, was grateful that whenever CEOs asked Gore for a meeting about the pending Telecommunications Act, the vice president insisted that Bahr be included. McEntee and Bahr credited Gore with persuading Clinton to block Texas's efforts to hand over the state's unionized welfare system to Lockheed Martin. At this month's executive council meeting, Tom Woodruff, head of organizing at the SEIU, summed up the prevailing sentiment among public- and service-sector trade unionists. "Gore is not as good politically as Clinton," he told me, "but Gore is actually better on our issues than Clinton was."

PROBLEM IS, LEADERS of the older, industrial unions—who identify Gore primarily with trade policies that, in their eyes, encourage cheap imports and runaway shops—disagree. "The UAW didn't have the same sort of experience with the administration as an AFSCME," said one union official. "On our issues the Clinton administration charted a course on trade that, almost from the beginning, was hostile to the UAW's interest." When Sweeney asked the industrial unions to endorse Gore, they balked. By making the endorsement a vote of confidence in his own leadership, he finally persuaded the Steelworkers and the Machinists to go along. Still holding out were the UAW and the Teamsters (who have their own reasons for disliking the Clinton administration—see "Brotherly Love," by Franklin Foer, TNR, August 14). But most people in the labor movement expected that it was only a matter of time. By spring, they would come around.

They didn't. Instead, trade battles left these unions even more alienated from Gore—and from Sweeney, too. Following the administration's controversial agreement in November to allow China into the World Trade Organization,

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"This bill includes almost $1 billion for an entirely new, and almost totally military, involvement in a civil war in Latin America, without the slightest promise that our intervention will be a success, and it does it in a totally backward fashion.

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"This bill says let's get in a war now and justify it later . . .

"It just seems impossible to me to believe that in the absence of the debate of the whole country, with all of the lessons we must have learned not just in this administration, but in previous administrations, about how easy it is to get in and how hard it is to get out, we will blithely make this downpayment — and this is a downpayment only . . .

"Next year, maybe we will need a lot more money if they are not doing very well down there. And how much of the equipment is going to end up in the hands of rebels by sale or capture or otherwise? We have no way of controlling that without a presence on the ground.

"I urge this body to say . . . we are not going to do this until you first come to us with a formal overall plan with a beginning, middle, and an end, and a plan for how we are going to achieve our goals. Get the authority first and then fund it. It is 10 times better for this society to put that $700 million on our debt and not get in a civil war in South America. That is what this debate is all about — not that we don't like the Colombians or that we don't want them to be successful, but we don't want a part of their war."

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Sweeney (who had earlier signed a letter backing the WTO in exchange for the administration's commitment to a WTO working group on workers' rights) faced the first real challenge to his leadership. With the industrial unions and Teamsters clamoring for action, Sweeney mobilized the federation behind the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle and against the administration's plan to grant permanent normal trading relations (PNTR) to China.

But Sweeney's new militancy couldn't erase the divisions his WTO letter had exposed. While all the unions opposed granting PNTR to China, some opposed it passionately and others barely cared. The UAW, the Teamsters, the Steelworkers, the Machinists, and the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE) bused thousands of workers to Washington, D.C., for the mid-April anti-WTO protests. So did some AFSCME and SEIU locals from industrial areas. But most service-sector and public-employee unions opposed PNTR the way they might have opposed funding for an unneeded aircraft carrier—by registering their protest and then forgetting about it. When the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) polled its members' priorities, trade and China appeared far down on the list. Says Greg Denier, the UFCW's communications director, "Social Security was at the top over all demographic groups, then health care and education. If you ask the members about PNTR, they are overwhelmingly opposed. But it was not one of the top twenty issues they cared about."

After the House voted in May to grant PNTR to China, Sweeney tried once again to pull the federation together in support of Gore, but trade kept getting in the way. In June, Gore appointed William Daley, who had headed the administration's NAFTA and PNTR lobbying campaigns, as his new campaign manager without first informing Sweeney. "It's not just PNTR," said one labor official in Chicago. "It's PNTR and then the next day... Gore comes out and selects Bill Daley to run his fucking campaign without telling John Sweeney. It's disrespectful."

On the eve of the Democratic convention, Sweeney received some long-awaited good news: the UAW was finally going to endorse Gore. But support isn't enough; what Gore needs from industrial unions like the UAW is enthusiasm. And right now it still isn't there, especially among the mid-level union staffers and activists who will run the AFL-CIO's get-out-the-vote drive in key states. Stewart Acuff, deputy director of the AFL-CIO's department of field mobilization in the Midwest, says, "Everybody understands the PNTR vote intellectually, but in the Midwest there is a more visceral reaction.... People are very angry." In Indiana, representatives to the state federation of labor are trying to revoke its endorsement of Democratic Representative Julia Carson because she voted for PNTR. The Midwestern region of UNITE wants Ralph Nader included in the presidential debates. One staff member at UNITE cited "a lack of enthusiasm about Gore in this union, a feeling that he is not on our side." In Chicago, a staffer at a large industrial union told me, "I think that the labor movement might be better off if the Democrats won the House and Gore lost." Unless Sweeney can convince his constituents not only to support Gore but to support him passionately, that staffer may get his wish. ■

Do we want an intellectual president?

Class Conflict

By MARTIN PERETZ

FORTY YEARS AGO, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the great narrative historian of the administrations of Andrew Jackson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, wrote a short book answering the question—now quaint but then on many sophisticates' lips—"Kennedy or Nixon: Does it make any difference?" Of course it does, he answered, and not only because the men would pursue different policies. Schlesinger framed the difference in terms of the two types of American personality first proposed by sociologist David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd*. Kennedy, Schlesinger suggested, was an "inner-directed" man "whose values and purposes are implanted within." The "other-directed" Nixon was "one who takes his standards from the group in which he aspires to live and who realizes himself as he identifies with what he deems respectable and enviable in the world outside himself." The inner-directed person "feels guilty when he violates his inner ideals.... The other-directed has no inner ideals to violate."

Yes, Schlesinger was a partisan. But so what? Elections are not only contests between candidates; they are contests between ideas and therefore appropriate occasions for serious reflection. Today, even more than when Schlesinger wrote, it is fashionable for people who care about ideas to dismiss presidential elections as meaningless and demeaning, but to do so is to place intellectual purity above public responsibility and to make the current highbrow cynicism about American democracy a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I, too, am a partisan. It's no secret that I admire Al Gore; to tell the truth, I've admired him ever since, as a Harvard freshman in 1965–1966, he took my seminar in modern social theory. It was the '60s, and the academic culture was much tainted by the rancor of ideological divides. Alas, the intellectual looseness that accompanied this rancor was not altogether absent from my classroom. But what I remember most about Gore was his insistent opposition—mostly by example—to that looseness and to the moral hauteur it encouraged. He was secure enough in his inner direction that he did not need to be self-righteous.

Even as an undergraduate, Gore set himself formidable intellectual challenges. I remember his early interest in arms control, spawned by what he considered an implausible account of why President Truman dropped the bomb. Very few students chose their classes as carefully as Gore did; he was not lured by the crowds. At the beginning of every term he came to my office, marked-up course catalog in hand, to discuss the choices he had made, usually 15 for the four slots. Three classes he took are especially salient, and they reflect his understanding that the teacher is more important than the syllabus. They also point to continuities

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and coherence in his life.

Gore enrolled in a course taught by Erik Erikson, the psychoanalyst who made identity a subject of our entire culture. Erikson had already written his seminal *Childhood and Society*, as well as a psychobiography of the young Martin Luther, and he proposed a model of healthy personality development, taking into account both family and society. The class exhilarated Gore, and I believe it helped make him the palpably good father he is today. Moreover, I still hear nuanced reverberations of Erikson when Gore discusses family policy, on which he and his wife, Tipper, have held yearly conferences in Tennessee for a decade. He understands the theory of family mental health and knows much of the practice as well.

Once, at a party in Cambridge in the late '60s, I met a senior colleague I hadn't encountered before. We enjoyed the serendipity of having a student in common; the student was Gore. The professor was Roger Revelle, who had recently arrived at Harvard from the Scripps Institute in California. Our deteriorating environment was not yet a fashionable topic, and Revelle was a true pioneer. Some thought him a kook; not Gore. As readers of *Earth in the Balance* will remember, Revelle is part of Gore's biography. It was Revelle who taught Gore that increasing levels of carbon dioxide would produce the greenhouse effect, a disaster to which Gore has long worked to draw public attention.

The third professor to whom Gore was drawn was Richard Neustadt, who as a young man had served as an aide to Clark Clifford, Truman's top lieutenant. Neustadt became his generation's acknowledged expert on the presidency, a subject he taught first at Columbia and then at Harvard. I do not think that, even in Neustadt's class, Gore had a gleam of being president. But in that class his views on Lyndon Johnson and the war became ever more sophisticated and ever more doubting. It was under Neustadt that Gore wrote his (summa) senior thesis on television and the presidency, a topic that has only grown in importance. During these last years of the Clinton administration, I have often wondered whether Neustadt and Gore spoke about Truman as FDR's vice president, Johnson as JFK's, or Hubert Humphrey as Johnson's. Would any of these ruminations have helped Gore navigate Clinton's rocky passage?

GORE ALSO BECAME acquainted with Doris Kearns, an emerging young scholar of the presidency, who happened to live in the same Harvard dormitory (Dunster House) as he. (She would eventually write lively books on the Kennedys and on Johnson and a dual biography of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.) Kearns and the young Gore talked about John Kennedy and LBJ and about these two willful men's responsibilities for the doomed war that was dividing the country. I believe that Gore's conversations with Kearns—his questions, her answers, their exchanges—were part of his preparation for the White House.

I didn't have the same window into George W. Bush's experience at Yale, but *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times* have investigated it at length, and what they recount is not reassuring. During the time Bush was there, Yale, a school where professors are more accessible than at Harvard, had more than its fair share of exceptional teachers and thinkers: Vincent Scully in the history of art and architecture, Robert Dahl in politics, Jaroslav Pelikan in religion, James Tobin and Charles Lindblom in economics, William Wimsatt and Geoffrey Hartman in literary studies, Edmund Morgan and C. Vann Woodward in American history. They were right there in New Haven. But Bush, who led a blithe life, didn't care to seek them out. As is typical of other-directed people, he tried to insulate himself from new and threatening ideas. The journalists who have delved into Bush's time at Yale suggest he learned only two things there: a hostility to liberal faculty, like Reverend William Sloane Coffin, who disliked his father's politics, and a hostility to the emerging meritocracy that threatened his social status on campus. Indeed, Bush was a caricature of the "gentleman's C" student, a particularly coarse species of affirmative action that died out soon after his matriculation and whose demise can only be viewed as a triumph of American democracy.

WHAT DOES THIS mean? Or, in Schlesinger's words, "Does it make any difference?" Do we really want an educated president? There is some evidence that, as a people, we either don't care or may even consider intellect a hindrance. The two best-educated presidents of the last century—Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Hoover—turned out to be failures. By contrast, there's no evidence that, while at Harvard, FDR availed himself of the wisdom of William James, George Santayana, or Josiah Royce. But this indifference did not prevent him from leading the country out of the Great Depression and to victory in World War II.

So performance in school, by itself, is no assurance of presidential aptitude. People can grow. Indeed, judging from his grades, at least, Gore grew between high school and college. But Bush, for all his claims to have grown morally since his wild and frivolous youth, has never claimed to have grown intellectually; and few have had the temerity to make the claim on his behalf. Even as governor of Texas, he has been known as a man with more baseballs in his office than books. As late as this spring, his performance in primary debates revealed only the most scant familiarity with issues of national importance.

Republicans, as a by-product of their worship of Ronald Reagan, have convinced themselves that intellectual engagement in a president is a sign of weakness. But they were wrong then, and they are even more wrong now. In the last decade alone, the presidency has become a far more intellectually exacting venture. No president can make responsible decisions on defense, on biological research and medical ethics, on the environment and fuel policy, on the protection of privacy or the expanding universe of information and knowledge technologies, without being able to fathom real scientific evidence and argument. He must know what questions to ask and how to decode and explain subtleties to a democratic public. To do this, he need not have actually mastered the new technologies from the inside. But, to understand their social ramifications, he must at least understand their scientific essentials.

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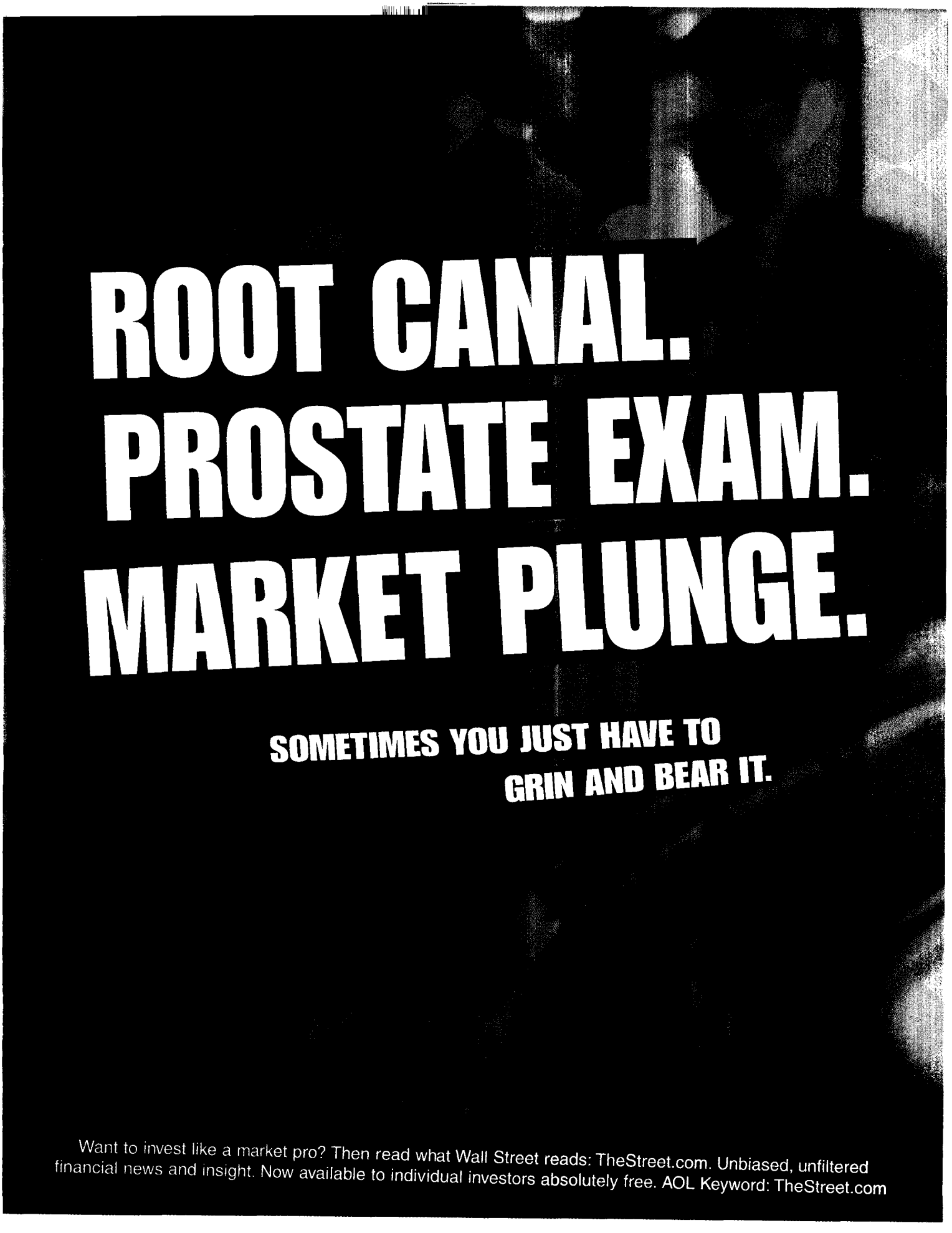
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Gore, uniquely, already grasps these essentials. While a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he showed his mettle as a defense intellectual, proposing in these pages (see "Stability for Two," TNR, November 17, 1986) and then persuading many others that the Midgetman missile could stabilize deterrence at a time when the multiple warhead MIRV was radically destabilizing it. No, he didn't invent the Internet. But he was the first American politician to understand it and the decisive politician in the process that cleared its way (a clear contrast with Bush and Dick Cheney, who both hail from that quintessential old-economy industry, oil). The editors of *The Wall Street Journal* may still pretend there is no global warming and no ozone hole. But Gore knew the science and could explain it, and, as a result, he played a central role in bringing these dangers to public attention and rallying government's response. Try to imagine George W. talking intelligently about any of this. Yes, as president, he would have advisers on these issues. Cold comfort: We don't elect advisers. We elect presidents.

Given all his campaign talk about education, you would think Bush would want his own life to impart some intrinsic message to youngsters about the need to take education seriously. But it doesn't. In a long sketch in *The New York Times*, headlined "AFTER YALE, BUSH AMBLED AMIABLY INTO HIS FUTURE," Jo Thomas quotes Bush as saying that he shared "a vision of matching off-season athletes with city kids in the Third Ward.... [I]t was a great experience." This was, as Bush's then-girlfriend put it, "trying to get a lot of the baseball players from the Astros and professional athletes to come there and show kids there was a way out." This is a patronizing view of how large numbers of inner-city children might join the rest of society. Professional athletes (and entertainers) are the great misleaders of the minority young. These children need to go to school and study and then become physicists and physicians, teachers and information technology technicians—not only to make a living but to lead a meaningful life. Baseball players do not embody this message, and neither does the Republican nominee for president. Indeed, the poor, minority children with whom candidate Bush so often surrounds himself could never follow his path. They could never meander aimlessly through their twenties and thirties, secure in the knowledge that others would bail them out until they learned better.

When Gore first ran for president in 1988, I wrote that the seriousness with which he pursued his education and the use to which he has put that education in his public career amount to a virtual bully pulpit for schools and schooling. Gore may not exactly be Thomas Jefferson, but, in his almost obsessive thirst for knowledge, he emulates his presidential hero, who required U.S. diplomats abroad to gather plant seeds not available at home. Yes, Gore's attitude to learning makes a difference. It is what gives him his capacity for growth and, as Nicholas Lemann recently pointed out in *The New Yorker*, for self-criticism—a good index of thoughtful inner-directedness. In my view, there are many reasons to be for him. But, given his opponent, this is reason enough. ■

Gephardt abandons the left.

Change for a Buck

By JONATHAN COHN

AL GORE'S NOT the only Democrat crisscrossing the country during the run-up to the November elections. House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt has already been on the road some 60 days this year, hitting as many as five cities per trip. He's trying to help his party retake the House, and he might just succeed. Smart money says the Democrats have at least a 50-50 shot of regaining the majority. If they do, Gephardt becomes speaker—the second most powerful elected Democrat in the land. If the Dems take the House and Bush takes down Gore, Gephardt becomes the first.

This, of course, is music to left-wing ears. For years Gephardt has been the face of unreconstructed liberalism, bucking the Clinton administration on welfare, the budget, and trade. Gephardt has sketched an elaborate critique of Clinton's entire New Democrat project—arguing that it substitutes tactics for principle and abandons the party's historic commitment to the working class. In a much-cited 1997 speech at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, Gephardt lashed out at those in his party "who set their compass only off the direction of others—who talk about the political center but fail to understand that if it is only defined by others, it lacks core values." Upset that "our leaders seem enamored with small ideas that nibble around the edges of big problems," Gephardt embraced an agenda that FDR could have called his own: universal health care, a longer school day, restructuring corporations to empower workers, and making enforceable labor standards a precondition for future trade agreements. Summing up the view from the party's left, a top union official recently mused, "Speaker Dick? That'd be pretty cool."

Or maybe not. Because, as I learned when I traveled with him a few weeks ago, the Dick Gephardt who has been touring the countryside this spring and summer looks nothing like the Gephardt so beloved by his allies. In fact, he is doing everything he can to dispel the image he spent years trying to create. At a recent town-hall-style meeting in Orlando,

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Florida, Gephardt ducked every opportunity to articulate grand liberal themes. When the first questioner asked him if Democrats would again pursue universal health care, he responded with a mechanical plug for piecemeal reform that would have made Dick Morris proud. "The Clinton plan failed because it was too big and too scary for people," he said. "I don't want to go through that again. What we've got to do is to go and do what we've been doing: move incrementally to cover more people." Gephardt also recalled the sacrifices of the World War II generation. Then he drew an analogy to the baby-boomers' generational challenge: reducing the national debt. This from a man who, in a 1997 interview with *The Atlantic Monthly*, mocked blind devotion to balanced budgets, saying a small deficit was a worthwhile price for greater government spending.

And it's not just when he's on the road; Gephardt has changed his tune in Washington as well. On issues ranging from trade to the budget, he is increasingly embracing the ideas and tactics he spent most of the last decade attacking. America's last truly influential old Democrat, it seems, has abandoned the fight. Which means that the Democratic Party enters its convention as united as the Republicans entered theirs. But it also means that the party ostensibly representing the working class has no leaders willing to give voice to that working class's discontent with globalization.

Although Gephardt's now-abandoned critique of Clintonism had its problems, it forced a debate about a trade policy and a fiscal policy that together exacerbated America's already yawning gap between rich and poor. Now that debate will take place not inside the Staples Center in Los Angeles but outside it—among people alienated from the political process and susceptible to the anti-corporate demagoguery that has been growing ever more prevalent since last fall's demonstrations in Seattle. Dick Gephardt may be a powerful man come November, but, by abandoning the principles that made him a distinctive voice within his party, he has squandered the moral and intellectual weight that provided him with a deeper kind of influence. He's just another Clintonite now.

ROB BARBONI

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THE GREAT IRONY of Gephardt's recent shift to the center is that it takes him back to where he began his congressional career 25 years ago. Gephardt first won election to Congress in 1976, as part of the Watergate generation that included Gary Hart, Tim Wirth, and Al Gore. Fascinated with technology and more interested in government reform than in class warfare, these Democrats shared a willingness to question liberal orthodoxy. In Gephardt's second term, he actually got a higher legislative rating from Americans for Constitutional Action (a conservative group) than from Americans for Democratic Action (a liberal one). So, when Al From started up the centrist Democratic Leadership Council in 1985, he enlisted Gephardt, his pal from Northwestern University, to serve as its first chairman.

But it didn't take long for Gephardt to break with the New Democrats on economic issues, especially trade. From his father, a milk-truck driver and a Teamster, he had inherited a more working-class sensibility. He also represented a St. Louis district full of Reagan Democrats: blue-collar union members straying from the Democratic Party on cultural issues but still relatively liberal on economics, particularly as their financial prospects dwindled. Indeed, by the late '80s, stagnant wages and plant closings—St. Louis is the nation's second-biggest city for auto manufacturing—were whetting the public's appetite for government assistance and sparking anger at Japanese automakers.

Gephardt's transformation into a fire-breathing populist was complete by the time he ran for president in 1988, on a platform that attacked Japanese trade practices and sought to protect American jobs by slapping import quotas on countries that didn't give U.S. manufacturers reciprocal access to their markets. "Unfair trade practices do not lower the standard of living of economists," he preached. "The editorial board of *The Wall Street Journal* doesn't have to worry about their jobs being shipped abroad."

Gephardt lost, but four years later he saw echoes of his populist crusade in Bill Clinton's campaign, with its proposals for new spending on public works and job training and its call for national health insurance. Like other liberals, though, Gephardt quickly became disillusioned. After dutifully pushing through Clinton's 1993 budget, even after it was stripped of the public-investment package Gephardt thought an important anti-recessionary measure, he had to deal with the North American Free Trade Agreement. Gephardt feared NAFTA would make it easier for American companies to relocate abroad, thus keeping wages down at home. Gephardt urged the president to strengthen the side agreements meant to protect labor and the environment. Clinton refused, and NAFTA passed largely on the strength of Republican votes.

But, if NAFTA opened an ideological gap between Gephardt and the president, it was the 1994 Republican rout—which sparked diametrically opposite reactions among Democrats in the White House and on Capitol Hill—that led him to craft those disagreements into a coherent critique of Clintonism. Although Newt Gingrich's rise is remembered as a moment of conservative triumph, in the House, paradoxically, its immediate effect was to move the Democratic Party to the left. The big Republican gains came in marginal districts in the South, at the expense of relatively conservative Democrats. Those who survived generally held the safest seats. So the Democratic caucus as a whole became more liberal. And, with former Speaker Tom Foley among 1994's victims, Gephardt rose to minority leader—becoming this left-leaning group's spokesman and public face.

In the White House, by contrast, Gingrich meant triangulation: Morris told the president that the way to save his political career was to use congressional liberals as a foil and define himself as the moderate alternative to both parties. Clinton heeded Morris's advice, embracing balanced budgets and signing the Republican welfare-reform bill—which left House Democrats aghast. Gephardt grew increasingly disenchanted, not just on trade but on much of domestic policy, declaring at one point, "Our agenda will come from America's houses, not from the White House."

By 1997, after a bruising battle over fast-track trade-negotiating authority, Gephardt was thinking of turning his differences with the White House into the basis for another presidential run—a run for the soul of the party against *über*-New Democrat Al Gore. And so he began fashioning his critique of free trade and fiscal conservatism into a coherent message, which he laid out in a series of media interviews and in one very important speech at Harvard's Kennedy School.

Weeks in the making, the Harvard speech stands out as one of the clearest statements of liberal principle in recent memory. A collaboration by longtime Gephardt advisers—wordsmith Bob Shrum and policy guru Mike Wessel—the speech was a call to action against global market forces that were, Gephardt said, widening inequality and disrupting family life even as they made the United States wealthier as a whole. Gephardt called upon government not merely to take better care of its citizens (through a higher minimum wage and universal health insurance, among other liberal policy nostrums) but to manage the world economy by setting the kind of rules Gephardt had fought for unsuccessfully in previous trade treaties. "It is our task," Gephardt declared, "now to slowly and painstakingly bring values and standards to the global economy—like the standards that we achieved in more than one hundred years in America—and still fight for every day." In a series of shots at Clinton and the by-then-departed Morris, Gephardt said it was still possible to propose big and bold policies. "This will be an era of small issues in our politics," Gephardt concluded, "only if fearful and calculating politicians make it so."

YET, EVEN AS Gephardt was laying the groundwork for a presidential campaign from the left, the electoral undertow in Congress was switching again, pushing his Democratic colleagues to the right. The party's gains in 1996 and 1998, like the losses in 1994, occurred mainly in moderate swing districts. But the new Democratic Party centrists were different from the old centrists in an important, if subtle, way. The old Dixiecrats based their partisan affinity more on bread-and-butter economics than on cultural issues. If anything, in their political profiles they were a little like the Reagan Democrats in St. Louis. The post-1996 wave

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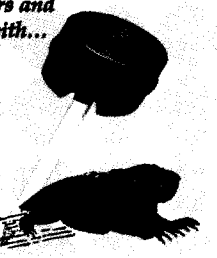

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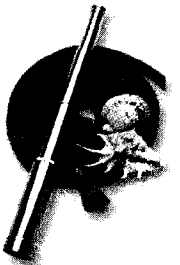

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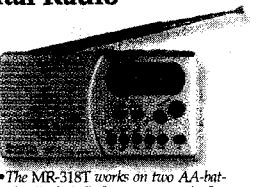

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of House moderates, by contrast, consisted mostly of young, pro-business lawmakers from upscale suburban districts. (Many had been recruited and promoted by the New Democrat Network, a centrist political action committee.) Their affinity with the Democratic Party lay in a common cultural tolerance, not in economics. In effect, they represented the very opposite of Gephardt's traditional labor constituency—the winners, not the losers, in the global economy.

The trend was illustrated by the appearance in 1996 of the New Democrat Coalition. Many of the coalition's members represented places like Silicon Valley or the suburbs of Washington, D.C.—places that never had manufacturing jobs and thus never lost them. In other words, these members' exposure to the global economy was entirely positive; they knew it only as the engine that made their constituents prosper. So their chief interest was not in regulating business but in protecting it from regulation. They wanted to create a "favorable business environment," which meant everything from pursuing more free-trade agreements (which would open up new markets overseas) to protecting companies from liability suits.

THIS WORLDVIEW PUT them in good stead with the high-tech industry—a useful alliance at fund-raising time. It also put them in conflict with Gephardt. And they let him know it. After Gephardt's 1997 Harvard speech, the coalition's three co-chairs—Representatives Cal Dooley of California, Jim Moran of Virginia, and Tim Roemer of Indiana—sent Gephardt a letter protesting his divisive rhetoric. "To suggest that those who do not agree with you are without principle and are motivated solely by political calculation is beneath your role as leader," the co-chairs wrote, "and contributes little to political debate within our party." Freshman Harold Ford Jr. of Tennessee, another coalition member, was even brasher, denouncing Gephardt's speech on CNN and later telling the *The New York Times Magazine*, "I reject what Gephardt says. How many shots do you continue to give the same management? If there's not a shake-up, we might as well get accustomed to being in the minority. We're still saying the same thing we were twenty-four years ago."

At first, Gephardt could afford to dismiss such threats. There were, after all, just 40 members in the fledgling caucus. But in 1998 three-fourths of the newly elected Democrats in the House joined the coalition, swelling its ranks to 64. And it wasn't long before they were flexing their muscle. The first real display came last November, over a New Democrat-sponsored and high-tech-industry-supported bill on "digital signatures" that would ease online commerce by allowing people to make legally binding agreements over the Internet. A leading consumer group opposed the measure, warning that it did not include enough legal protections for unsophisticated consumers, and Representative John Dingell of Michigan proposed an alternative that had much less appeal to business. Gephardt backed Dingell, but he couldn't get the New Democrats on board. Some 70 Democrats broke ranks and, with the help of Republicans, the New Dems' bill passed. "That," says one senior congressional staffer, "was somewhat of a wake-up call."

IT WAS RIGHT around that time that Gephardt, who had decided against a presidential run, began once more to alter his public posture with carefully orchestrated events and speeches. The first six months of 2000 were 1997 in reverse. Aware that he needs the support of moderates, both within the House Democratic caucus and in the electorate at large, Gephardt has begun repackaging himself as a tech-friendly centrist. That's the reason he's spent so much time this year campaigning in places like Orlando, where a candidate endorsed by the New Democrat Network hopes to prevail in a district with more Republican voters than Democrats.

It's also why he's bent over backward to court new-economy CEOs, whom the public associates with economic growth and who, not incidentally, represent a treasure trove of campaign contributions. This March, in the heart of the high-tech "Dulles corridor" outside Washington, at a breakfast hosted by the Information Technology Association of America, Gephardt gushed, "I'm so passionate about what you are doing." He then endorsed a laundry list of business-friendly initiatives, from making research tax credits permanent to releasing encryption technology. The speech wasn't a flip-flop per se; Gephardt had not actually opposed these specific ideas in the past. But prostrating government before industry is in sharp contrast to his persona in the mid-'90s, when he proposed limiting corporate tax breaks to those businesses willing to abide by "best practices" when it comes to labor relations. "Just because we believe in capitalism," Gephardt said back then in a speech at the labor-friendly Economic Policy Institute, "does that mean that we only care about capital?"

Gephardt's outreach to the increasingly powerful suburban moderates in his caucus has required even more reinvention. While Gephardt has always favored deficit reduction, he frequently found the crusade for absolute budget balance overzealous. "We've got to get off this idea that [balance] has to be exactly mathematically calibrated each and every year or we're all going to turn into pumpkins," he said in 1997. But now Gephardt endorses not just keeping the budget in balance but going further and reducing the national debt. "I heard Dick make one of the best fiscal-responsibility speeches in the caucus last week that I've ever heard somebody make," Representative Charles Stenholm of Texas, one of the caucus's most conservative members, told me late last month. "It wasn't something I would have heard him or any other leader of the Democratic Party say five years ago."

The change has been more than just rhetorical. Consider the way Gephardt handled the debate over so-called H-1B visas earlier this year. H-1Bs allow foreigners to stay in the United States as long as they remain with the same employer. Congress authorizes only a certain number of these visas each year, and technology companies—complaining that there aren't enough skilled workers to meet their explosive labor needs—have been pushing to raise the quota. But unions say industry is exaggerating the worker shortage; after all, foreigners make better employees, since they will work for less and lack the legal rights (namely, the right to change jobs) granted to American citizens.

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In the past, Gephardt voted against H-1B expansion. But this year he has seen things differently. When his office got wind that some New Democrat members were contemplating a bill to raise the cap, he contacted them—not to stall the measure but to contribute to its crafting. Gephardt arranged for a meeting in his office between the New Democrat sponsors and AFL-CIO head John Sweeney. The proposed legislation was slightly more labor-friendly than past efforts in that it raised the fees on visas and plowed the money into worker retraining, but it was essentially the same idea as before. Yet, shortly after each side made its case, Gephardt publicly endorsed the New Democrats' bill, giving cover to other Democrats. The unions, realizing that Gephardt wouldn't back them, gave way. "Labor didn't get exercised over it or blast the New Democrats," says one senior staffer who worked on the bill, "and I think Dick Gephardt had a whole lot to do with that." Adds Dooley, "I give him a lot of credit for that. It's not a position universally embraced, but he embraced it."

Gephardt's new outlook was even more evident in his stance on permanent normal trading relations (PNTR) with China. Given Gephardt's history of skepticism toward free trade, many in and around Congress assumed he would take the lead against this bill, too. Yet Gephardt, though he voted against PNTR, did little to rally Democrats to his cause. Indeed, in January of this year he told a meeting of the New Democrat Coalition that PNTR should be a vote of conscience—essentially giving Democrats license to abandon the House leadership and vote for PNTR. The measure's supporters say Gephardt was a crucial ally in their endeavor. "When you look at the role he played in PNTR, Dick did nothing to really influence a significant number of Democratic colleagues to vote against it," says Dooley. It was "a sea change from the traditional position that he had held with regard to trade," adds lobbyist and Democratic operative Jeff Modisett. "I think that went a long way toward allowing enough Democrats [to vote for the measure] so that it could win in the House."

CHANGE, OF COURSE, can be both authentic and constructive. One of the premises of Gephardt's 1997 critique was an ongoing decline in living standards despite widespread prosperity. But today even the working poor are seeing their fortunes improve. There's no shame in reexamining a worldview that no longer fits the world. "My whole time in politics, the issue has been, 'Where can we get more jobs?' " Gephardt says these days. "Now the issue is trying to get more people to fill the jobs."

What's more, all successful leaders must compromise *sometimes*. Both friends and foes say Gephardt is a master conciliator who will sit through hours of meetings to bring opposing sides toward common ground. (That's why a former colleague once dubbed him "Iron Butt.") And if Gephardt's consensus-building keeps the Democrats united behind a common message, and that helps them take back the House, it could also help the blue-collar constituents Gephardt says he cares about—if only by depriving Republicans of the chance to set the agenda.

But the current consensus can take Gephardt and his party only so far. Right now, unity is easy because House Democrats share a common adversary—the GOP—and a common goal—taking back the House. But their common agenda, should they actually become the majority again, really consists of just one issue, education, in which high-tech business and labor happen to share a common interest: churning out educated high-tech workers. Beyond that, there is plenty of room for conflict. For example, what happens as labor-organizing in Silicon Valley, now in its infancy, gets rolling—and the unions start to make a big issue of the treatment of part-time and contingent workers? What happens when the next president—be it George W. Bush or Al Gore—tries to expand NAFTA throughout the Americas? What happens when it finally dawns on Washington that the budget surpluses aren't as big as they seem and that maintaining fiscal discipline means sacrificing long-postponed government spending or endangering Social Security and Medicare?

Gephardt's old allies seem convinced that, when push comes to shove, the old Gephardt—the *real* Gephardt—will reappear. But given his abrupt shift over the last year, not only rhetorically but legislatively, it's hard to be certain just who the real Gephardt is. The one thing we do know about Gephardt is that he's responsive to his constituencies. And those constituencies are becoming more and more fiscally conservative, both in the House and even in his St. Louis district, which is increasingly dominated by upscale suburbanites.

THIS DOESN'T MEAN we've heard the last of Gephardt-style arguments about government's responsibility to ameliorate the dislocations of the global economy. In fact, the tonic of prosperity notwithstanding, anger about globalization's impact on American and global inequality has bubbled up with growing force over the last year, from the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle to the surprising success of Ralph Nader to the alternative convention in Los Angeles this week. Where those discontents are no longer being heard is within the leadership of the Democratic Party—a party that would, in an ideal world, funnel such concerns into the mainstream debate, passing sensible reforms that humanize globalization without trying to end it. Maybe the party would continue to embrace free trade, but with more meaningful protections for workers' rights. Maybe it would continue to create a business environment that allows rapid transformation and dislocation, but with a larger (and more expensive) safety net for those workers hurt by it. The Democratic Party may not feel great pressure to play this role now, when times are good. But, if it doesn't, it may find that when the economy turns sour, the ensuing alienation is harnessed by people much more hostile to American capitalism and American democracy. As one prominent critic of globalization put it a few years ago, "It may be the course of least resistance to celebrate the success we have had. But, if we care about the long-term strength and stability of this society, we dare not shrink from facing the other facts of our national condition." That critic was Dick Gephardt. Too bad he isn't around anymore. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

In Our Heads

LATELY I HAD a shock that I have had before. I went to see a film that I had seen decades ago and discovered that my opinion of it had changed greatly. It was Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard*, which was released in 1963 and which I reviewed that year, a large-scale drama of the Sicilian nobility in the time of the Garibaldi invasion. Seeing it again, I was overwhelmed. I looked up my review and blushed. Yes, I had praised the film's visual splendor, but I wriggled now at the rest. A few hours before, I had been greatly stirred by this film, which in 1963 I had indicted for shortcomings in acting and directing. Most of the performances now seemed more integral and true than they had once seemed, and Visconti's virtuosity in directing, which I had once scorned for ostentation, now seemed much more at the service of the work.

I had felt this same discomfort with some other past reviews of mine, though certainly not with many. Most often my latter-day opinion is more or less what it once was. Soon after this second viewing of *The Leopard*, I re-saw Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975), re-read my review, which was negative, and would not have changed a word. And also, of course, I have sometimes thought less of a work than I once did. But, among my latter-day upward revisions, *The Leopard* was extreme. I had really been swept along by this second encounter, and my first review seemed almost to have been written by someone else.

I tried to understand what had changed. With the acting, the explanation was simple. Originally the distributors had feared to release this Italian film in the United States with subtitles. *The Leopard* had an American star, and they thought that audiences here would not want to hear him speaking Italian—or someone else speaking his Italian lines for him. So in the 1963 version the star, Burt Lancaster, spoke his own lines in English, and all the other actors were dubbed—quite unskillfully—into English. Most of those performances had been jarred askew by American voices. Now, when I heard these actors with their own voices, they seemed more rounded, three-dimensional, alive. The chief improvement, contradictory though it sounds, was in Lancaster, who plays a Sicilian prince. In 1963, with his own voice, he had seemed hollow. Now, dubbed in Italian, he was much more believable and commanding. (A few years ago I learned that Lancaster had been dubbed by a famous Sicilian actor, Turi Ferro.) He even *looked* more princely. Though that earlier English soundtrack had hurt the rest of the cast, the replacement of Lancaster's somewhat gassy voice with one of ring and authority seemed to arch his back.

As for Visconti's directing, my altered response might well have been because in recent years I, like many others, have been starved for imaginative, individualistic filmmaking style—a treasure that was showered on us in the 1960s. Now, hungry for the feeling that a unique artist—not a corporation—had made a film, I was suffused with gratitude as I watched Visconti's hand figuratively caressing every measure of sumptuousness, of cultural texture, in scene after scene. Such a moment as the spreading of an immense tablecloth on the grass when the prince's family stops to picnic during the journey from Palermo to their summer palace, with the grooms walking the horses in the background to cool them down—I longed for it to linger. The very last moment of the picture, in a small Palermo square at midnight, where the prince kneels and crosses himself when a priest and acolytes hurry past to someone's bedside, now seems a peak in film art.

Explanations or not, I still felt somewhat miserable about my four-decades-old review, and in my misery I sought company. I remembered that Eliot in 1947 had publicly recanted the low opinion of Milton that he had once published. (Ten years earlier he had written that Milton was a poet whose sensual capacities "had been withered early by book learning.") I remembered, too, how Shaw, in his persona as music critic, had recanted in old age his much earlier dismissal of Brahms's *Requiem* as music that could be "patiently borne only by the corpse." These lofty examples consoled me a bit; but they did more than that. They confirmed my belief that criticism is always in some degree diaristic, a journal of experiences rather than a series of cast-iron pronouncements. This is one more proof of the mercurial nature of truth. Every serious critic speaks the truth of his opinions, but that truth comes from the person he is at that moment, not the person of his past or his future.

When we respond to a critic, we can keep in mind that both he and we are communicating at exactly that moment. Certainly a very great deal of criticism that I have been reading through the years has benefited me through those years, has stood firm. It is the exceptions that are worrisome.

Charles Rosen, one of the most rewarding critics writing today, magisterial in the fields of music and literature and painting and aesthetics, has faced this dilemma, in himself and in his writing. In the introduction to his collection, *Romantic Poets, Critics, and Other Madmen*, Rosen says:

> In collecting these essays, I have left them without correction.... I do not want to read any fictitious foresight into these essays, or to inject any observations on the most interesting of modern trends. It seemed more honest to try to bring them up to date by adding a postscript when an apology or second thoughts seemed advisable, or when subsequent developments needed to be remarked. Where some of the discussion has dated, I hope that the reader will be pleased to remark a certain period flavor.

Those comments could helpfully preface any collection of criticism. (I may say that I have often used the postscript device in my own collections.) But, though the postscript is useful to critics, it doesn't solve the problem, which besets everyone, critic or not. Our minds are freighted with beliefs that we may no longer believe.

That is the most important aspect. All these reservations are true for everyone, not just for critics. The plain, discomfiting fact is that every one of us who has watched plays and films or read books or listened to music or looked at painting and architecture is, in some measure, self-deceived. Filed away in the recesses of our minds are thousands of opinions that we have accumulated through our lives, and they make us think that we know what we think on all those subjects. We do not. All we know is what we once thought, and any earlier view of a work, if tested, might be hugely different from what we would think now.

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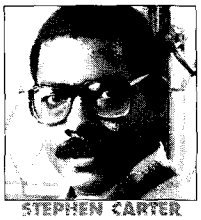

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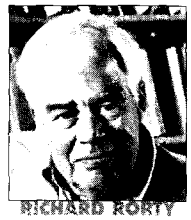

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What can we do about it? Other than realize that this condition exists, very little. We cannot spend our lives reexamining past experiences to keep our opinions up to date. We have to operate with a certain degree of trust. If someone asks my opinion of Laurence Olivier's Oedipus, which I saw three times in 1946, all I can do is summon up as best I can what I felt and thought in 1946 and hope that I would react the same now. If the question is about *War and Peace*, I can either sit down and re-read it before answering or dig out my memory file of what I thought when I last re-read it thirty years ago. All of us rely on what our former selves, sometimes quite different selves, once thought. It's a scary realization—that we are all carrying around in our heads a lot of opinions with which we might now disagree. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

Ms. Smith Goes to Washington

LIKE SO MANY bruised arts administrators before her, Jane Alexander—the sixth chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts—has bandaged her wounds with a memoir. It is part autobiography, part political history, part revenge play about Alexander's role in the culture wars of the 1990s. Entitled *Command Performance*—a theatrical metaphor worked (and overworked) further in such chapter headings as "Curtain Up," "On the Road," "Backstage," and so forth—the book is, at its best, an honest effort to explore the unholy marriage between politics and art, a relationship that, in this author's case, ended in a rather unhappy divorce.

A well-respected actress, trained in the nonprofit theater and rewarded (as she tells us a little too often) with multiple Tonys and Academy Award nominations, Alexander was the first arts practitioner to be selected as head of this troubled institution. Indeed, the Clinton administration literally plucked her out of the New York run of *The Sisters Rosenzweig*, despite her total lack of administrative experience. Alexander was among a number of gifted women that the President had invited to the White House in official positions. But unlike Zoe Baird, Lani Guinier, and Kimba Wood, she actually made it through the bruising confirmation process with a minimum of scars. This she owed not only to her personable character but also to her rather appealing naïveté.

Reared in Brookline, Massachusetts as the cherished daughter of a sports doctor, Alexander was indoctrinated from birth to be "proud of what our democracy stood for, and idealistic in our political beliefs." These sentiments, combined with her "strong opinions on issues" and her "hatred of injustice," led her to join protests against the Vietnam War and stimulated her passion in defense of civil rights. Unlike many other young people of her time, she had a profound faith in the system, believing, for example, "that if our elected officials knew the truth they would act on it." In short, this was a woman virtually destined for disillusionment. Her progress in office reminds me of Jimmy Stewart's in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, an innocent who comes to Congress filled with high ideals—before he discovers that Boss Edward Arnold alone determines who gets elected, in both political parties.

When Claiborne Pell called Alexander to ask whether she might be interested in heading the NEA, there was little question that if offered she would accept the job. She was by her own admission "an NEA baby," and she was flattered that an actress could be asked to take charge of such an important agency. When President Clinton called to place her name in nomination, she wasn't home. Following that, he wasn't home. Clinton not only failed to call her again, he never returned any of her calls or letters. One of the running themes of this book is how deeply uninterested the President is in the NEA. Alexander concludes: "The president's men thought that art was a 'soft' issue—leave it to the ladies, and he did." Indeed, he left it to the first lady. Hillary Clinton warmed to Alexander possibly because she had once played her idol Eleanor Roosevelt on television. Bill ignored her probably because, unlike movie stars, artists generate few votes and fewer political contributions. I can vouch for the President's lack of focus on the arts. Following a conversation with Mrs. Clinton in which she showed some concern about the NEA, I tried to talk to her husband about the crisis in our culture. He started to lecture me on China!

Unlike her predecessors under Republican administrations, Alexander was an instinctual civil libertarian. (John Frohnmayer also became converted to the First Amendment during his last year in office, only to be fired for his new beliefs by George Bush). She retained a genuine concern for free expression at a time when some very powerful members of Congress were burdening the arts with content restrictions. By her own admission, the new chairman withheld her personal opinions about individual works, and she tried her best (not always successfully) to obey Clinton's indirect order to stay out of the newspapers. But just as it was Frohnmayer's destiny to be brought down by the Mapplethorpe and Serrano controversies, so it was on her watch that flaps occurred regarding Ron Athey (an HIV-positive man who drew designs with a scalpel on the back of another performer), Annie Sprinkle (a feminist who invited people onstage to examine her labia), and Tim Miller (a gay performance artist who offended Jesse Helms by appearing before audiences nude). As usual, a handful of controversial grants were threatening to upset the whole applecart.

Alexander discovered early on that the conservative animus against the NEA was driven by a strong Puritanism and a powerful homophobia. In her heart, she wanted to defend controversial artists, often repeating that art, by its very nature, was sometimes destined to be offensive. But after concluding that "it was important for me to tread lightly and appease our detractors," she decided to get rid of grants to individual artists. Senator Nancy Kassebaum had told her, "You can't defend controversial art, don't even try." she was also learning that "jumping up and down about the First Amendment and freedom of expression only made things worse, like waving a red flag at a bull." As a result, Alexander rarely referred to controversial grants directly for fear of arousing the ire of people like Senator Strom Thurmond. At the same time that she could write that "a mature democratic society accepts the full range of artistic endeavor, even when it is outrageous," she was not prepared to jeopardize

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the NEA for the sake of a handful of provocative avant-garde artists.

This meant that Alexander's defense of art would never rise much above rhetorical generalities. Exercising her considerable charm on such courtly paleocons as Jesse Helms, Orrin Hatch, and Alan Simpson, she managed to win their affections without changing their votes. She dressed conservatively in low heels and drab colors so as not to attract attention, making frequent appearances in the offices, the antechambers, and the hearing rooms of the House and the Senate to argue and to define the value of the arts. A hundred versions of these arguments and definitions are quoted in the book, and they clearly come from a warm well-meaning heart. But reading such testimonials on virtually every page has the same numbing effect as listening to a fanatic on homeopathic medicine endlessly professing the therapeutic value of St. John's Wort. "It was wearing," she writes, "to have to explain again and again what the Arts Endowment did for the country or for a congressional district." It is wearing to read it, too. Clearly, if the arts need so much justification each time the NEA comes up for reappropriation, then the future of this troubled agency is very cloudy indeed.

Perhaps in an effort to avoid the storms that plagued her predecessor Frohnmayer, Alexander began to grow more and more populist in her postures and procedures. She became more interested in the ways that the arts could aid the handicapped and the underprivileged, and she increased the proportion of money going to legacy and preservation. Embarking on an exhausting tour of all fifty states—partly in order to see how the NEA was affecting artists, partly to placate politicians who wanted more equal geographical distribution of agency funds—she heard many arts administrators complaining that too much money was going to outreach programs when what they needed desperately was money for operating costs. Her answer was that she could "sell" Congress better on "outreach" than on art. She was beginning to grasp the secret of all who want to stay in office: stick to practical goals. She was also learning how to flatter the electorate. Asked by local citizens why the first state she came to was Maine, she received cheers when she replied, "As Maine goes, so goes the nation."

It was under acting Chairman Ann Imelda Radice that the NEA first began to confuse its mandate as an arts agency with that of a conduit for fostering handicrafts and "indigenous arts." It was under the administration of Alexander, eager to defend the agency against charges of "elitism" after her cross-country trip, that this process was accelerated. Quilt-making began to share an equal place with symphonic composition, and the achievements of playwrights were considered no more worthy of subsidy than those of ironmongers and plasterers. None of these expedients reduced the woes of the NEA. The Republican Congress elected in 1994, led by Newt Gingrich and prodded by the religious right, began to call for the agency's abolition or privatization (same thing), and not even Alexander's considerable charm, preternatural coolness, and tireless appeals could persuade legislators that the arts really mattered. For all the support of such stalwarts as Sidney Yates and Teddy Kennedy, the NEA suffered massive cuts that virtually ended its life as an effective cultural force.

Alexander was rapidly learning about the inevitable tension between high art and democracy, and there was nothing she could do to halt the Congressional juggernaut. Wearied by the struggle, and caught between a powerful if ignorant Congress and an angry if impotent art world, she was beginning to sound like someone who had fallen from grace, her innocence irreparably lost. She maintained her composure in public, she was growing uncharacteristically acerbic behind the scenes. In her book she describes Tom Delay as a man "whose brain could fit in an egg cup," and Strom Thurmond as a "taut, leathery gnome of a man with hair of a color not found in nature." She began to see little hope for the arts until legislators became more intelligent—which meant that she could see no hope for the arts. It would seem that this classic liberal was losing faith not only in politicians but also in politics.

Despite her disillusionment, there are times when Alexander seems just a bit too eager to claim large credit for small victories. Having presided over a 40 percent cut in the agency's budget and the firing of 89 staff members, she hoots like a conqueror ("We had triumphed.... The NEA was here to stay") just because instead of axing the agency, the Congress had decided by one vote to reappropriate its measly 99 million dollars. And for what purpose? Alexander is forced to restructure the stricken agency so that only one-fourth of the grants go to the arts (now called "creation and presentation"), while the lion's share goes to such public and community concerns as heritage, preservation, education, access, planning, and stabilization, concerns that serve the consumer rather than the artist.

Alexander probably could have been less of a diplomat with legislators, and more of an advocate for the avant-garde and the high arts. With hindsight, she had nothing to lose by a more forthright stand since, for all of her charm, graciousness, and tact, she failed to save the agency

Reflection

These animals whose faces are wider than planets

will never change back into men.

I'm sure the centaurs from the yellow forests would be
a comfort should they come for a short while.

Jellyfish sun in their petticoats.
Ghosts smooth down in the spindrift.

Stones fall from a ledge into thunder. This island
is tired of its own voice.
Patterns of scales

on a washed-up fish make a map of a Byzantine city—
interlocking S streets, mazes without keys.

No axis, only swirls by which to measure the time
before the what-I-know-now.

Out of clay I shape a bowl
like a pelican's mouth and press in chips
of blue shell for sequin shine.

What shall I lust after now?

A lobster whose claws turned into paws
and then crept up for company?
Or the face of a knight pulled from a squid?

Molly Bendall

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from become a limping animal, disabled by the Congressional axe. But *Command Performance* is possibly more interesting as a personal bildungsroman than as a history of a crippled government agency—a tale of what befalls a liberal American idealist at the close of the twentieth century.

In the last year of her administration, Alexander finally got an audience with the President and an opportunity to explain three things—that the arts need federal support, that they are not elitist ("I mentioned the Delta Cultural Center in his own state of Arkansas as an example"), and that the NEA would no longer fund controversial art. "That sounds good," replied the President. "They've got to understand the public won't pay for that." The Arts Chairman writes that she felt a wave of "idealism" at this point, and began longing for a President who would "embrace the full spectrum of tastes, one that included all kinds of art." But she realized that she was in the real world, the world of compromise: "watering things down to make them the most palatable for the most people; being manipulative when need be to get elected; and being diplomatic which meant not saying what is really on your mind." She wrote these words about Bill Clinton, but she may as well be referring to herself and the way she became absorbed by the system.

Command Performance ends with the disastrous Supreme Court decision on the NEA Four, ruling that the Congress did indeed have the right to impose content restrictions on NEA grantees. It was only the most recent in a string of defeats for the cause of a subsidized and uncensored American art. Alexander, who began with such fervent hopes, and such eagerness to serve her country and her constituency, returns to the professional stage, her hair grey and twenty pounds heavier, persuaded that "the system is so corrupt that it may never be fixed." It is a sad and dispiriting note on which to end four years of dedicated service, and none of her passionate testimonials to the abiding power of artistic expression can disguise or mitigate a sense of failed national purpose. ■

The Golden Age

By JACKSON LEARS

American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century by Christine Stansell

(Henry Holt, 420 pp., $30)

DURING THE 1970s, on brick-and-board bookshelves in shabby-genteel apartments throughout the land, a careful observer might still have found a slender, unassuming paperback called *Living Poor With Style*. The title embodied the waning worldview of the 1960s counterculture, its fusion of aesthetics and politics, pleasure and poverty. Embedded in that ethos was the assumption that choosing economic marginality could be a way of choosing freedom. However silly or self-righteous the countercultural stance could become, it at least recognized that pleasure must not be confused with high-level consumption. The pursuit of a satisfying life required escape from the hamster-cage of earning and spending. And this notion, for all its insistence upon its newness, linked the counterculture of the 1960s to a bohemian tradition that stretched back at least to the turn of the century, and that coexisted fruitfully with anarchist and socialist criticisms of capitalism.

Autre temps, autre moeurs. It has become fashionable these days to emphasize, even to celebrate, the assimilation of bohemian ideals to capitalist realities. The "bourgeois bohemian" is becoming a stock figure in social criticism, or what passes for it. Trendy boutiques and lame attempts at politically correct purchasing have become the stuff of neo-conservative satire. The implicit message of such gloating is always the same: bohemia has disappeared into up-market fashion. And one would be hard pressed to deny that this new pop-sociological cliché has a basis in reality. Gentrified real estate prices and a resurgent mythology of wealth have made it nearly impossible to live poor with style, or to associate poverty with anything but failure; and the idea that one would actually choose poverty, or material austerity, has become virtually unthinkable.

Still, the complacent dismissal of bohemia suffers from several defects. It displays the common media myopia regarding the existence of any American with less than a six-figure income. Bohemian enclaves may well be sprouting in various unfashionable places; but if they are, they would almost certainly be rendered invisible by the euphoric haze of our current cultural climate, wherein the creation of wealth seems the only barometer of social good. At the same time, the current conventional wisdom reduces bohemianism to a set of aesthetic gestures: living poor with style becomes merely living with style (retro, techno, pomo, whatever). This definition ignores the centrality of voluntary poverty to the bohemian impulse, and deprives it of any political significance, and promotes a tendency to read contemporary conditions back into the past. The result is all too often a flat, monochromatic picture of twentieth-century American cultural history, in which the conflict between bourgeois and bohemian is reduced to a meaningless *pas de deux*, and a voracious consumer ethos swallows all who attempt to dissent from it.

ONTO THIS GRAY canvas Christine Stansell splashes some color. One reason to welcome her superb book is that she has restored the larger meanings of American bohemianism, by focusing on a place and a time in which the cultural avant-garde was also vigorously and undeniably political. The place is Greenwich Village; the time is the turn-of-the-century to World War I. For an exhilarating decade or so, young men and women flocked from the provinces to the cluttered, noisy streets of lower Manhattan—crowding into cafés, rubbing shoulders with immigrant anarchists and socialists, tossing back whiskeys, chattering of revolutionary change. Some became prominent figures in public life: Max Eastman, the energetic, good-looking editor of *The Masses* who discovered early on (as many men have since discovered) that displaying his feminist credentials was a good way to attract emancipated women; Emma Goldman, the crusading anarchist and advocate of free love who could (her admirers claimed) transform your life with a single speech; Mabel Dodge,

JACKSON LEARS teaches history at Rutgers University and is writing a book on chance and luck in American culture.

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the socialite whose salon mingled poets, painters, and labor radicals.

At their most frivolous, the Village bohemians were easily parodied poseurs: "tin pot revolutionaries and sophomoric advanced thinkers," Mencken called them. At their most ambitious and serious, the Village bohemians yearned to fuse art and politics in a transforming critique of bourgeois civilization—its injustice, its hypocrisy, its stifling of the soul. As Stansell demonstrates, the bohemians staked out positions that would constitute a peculiarly American version of modernism, and would make their slice of Manhattan into a staging area for the major cultural changes of the subsequent decades.

During those days before the first World War, before socialism was tainted by communism and liberalism was tainted by chauvinism, there was a heady atmosphere of expectation enveloping everyone from trade-unionists to philosophers. "The revolutionary pot seems to be boiling," a labor organizer said in 1912. "The day of transformation is at hand." George Santayana was less fervent but equally engaged. "The present age is a critical one and interesting to live in," he wrote in 1913. "The civilization characteristic of Christendom has not yet disappeared, yet another civilization has begun to take its place." To a wide variety of observers it seemed indeed that "human character" (as Virginia Woolf famously put it), had changed fundamentally "on or about December 1910," and would never be the same. Human character, and the character of American life.

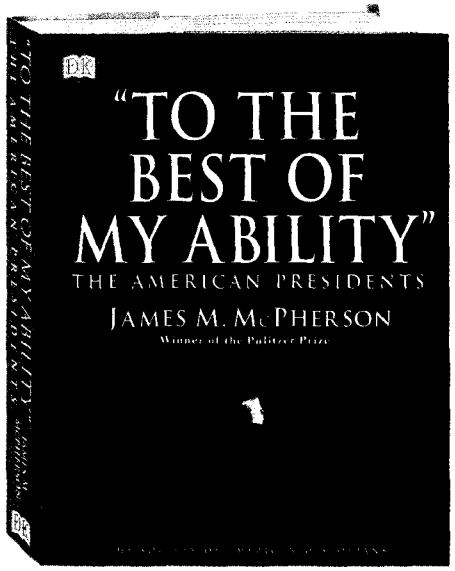
This may be the reason that American historians have long looked to the prewar avant-garde to discover everything that they liked (or disliked) about the culture to follow: a freer (or a more promiscuous) attitude toward sexuality; a more sympathetic (or a more sentimental) relationship between intellectuals and the working class; a more open and honest (or a more cloying and narcissistic) preoccupation with the inner life. Stansell provides a nuanced account of those changes, but also something more. She restores some freshness to the Village idea of personal politics—a notion that has come to seem seem stale in an era of ritual public confessions and presidents who feel our pain.

Stansell rightly recognizes the courage involved in the bohemians' effort to blend personal life and political life, to bring democracy into the domain of intimate relations, and to infuse policy debate with a new sense of emotional vitality—even as she acknowledges the confusion wrought by the project, the constant risk of reducing intimacy to a power struggle and politics to a self-dramatizing spectacle. Unlike any male historian before her, moreover, Stansell captures the complexity of the reasons for the radicals' failure: not only wartime repression and disillusionment, but also the persistence of male domination in the guise of liberation.

THE RESULT IS a subtle and finely grained portrait of the Village bohemians. Stansell's book is forcefully and sometimes elegantly written, closely observed, and carefully argued. It evokes the utopian hopes of pre-war bohemianism, the multiplying strains and tensions, the catastrophic collapse. It captures also the flash of the distinctive personalities—Eastman, Goldman, Dodge, and others too: John Reed, the boyish bard of revolution; Margaret Anderson, the witty and venturesome editor of the *Little Review* (which published the first excerpts from *Ulysses*); and Randolph Bourne, the hunchback dwarf whose essays attacking intellectuals' support for World War I constitute an incandescent body of cultural criticism, perhaps the most brilliant political polemics ever penned by an American hand. *American Moderns* makes clear that, along with the posturing, there was real bravery involved in the bohemian project.

Stansell's identification with her subjects sometimes obscures understanding. Like them, she tends to caricature Victorian culture as a rigid, repressive monolith—a straw man the moderns could set on fire with their "vivacious, bold, and honest talk." Victorian talk, by comparison, was dominated by "the mannered conversation of the patrician drawing room and arty salon as well as the barren commonplaces of the middle class parlor." For such a view, the old culture was brittle and tottering, held together only by "moribund, prettified conventions" that the moderns aimed to shatter en route to "a more profound experience of human relations in talking, in writing, in sexual expression." Occasionally Stansell falls victim to the same dualism that was promoted by her protagonists, as when she asks: "Who, then, was better equipped to talk to and for America—a fading patriciate of old men holed up in their gentlemen's clubs or a group of people, arrivistes of many sorts, gathered out of the crevices and far places of the country?"

The contrast between inauthentic Victorians and authentic moderns accurately captures the bohemians' sense of suffocation and longings for release, but as a historical analysis it is inadequate. It distorts the experience of many Victorians themselves. For the young moderns' yearnings were prefigured by those of their parents' generation. Inspired by



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ideals of "self-culture" and "enthusiasm," writers from Whitman to William James exalted intense experience in their lives and in their work. They were no more satisfied with stultifying convention than their successors were. Contrary to the assertions of the bohemians, energy, wit, and even sexual pleasure were available before 1900. Victorian literature—including the allegedly timid William Dean Howells, let alone Henry James—was pervaded by erotic undertones that were all the more powerful for being indirect.

Not only were the Victorians more capable of enjoying sex than the younger generation imagined (this is a recurring mistake, made by nearly every cohort of rebellious youth in twentieth-century American history), but the old fuddy-duddies could deftly deploy their own rhetoric of authenticity. Sincerity and passion were benchmark Victorian values. Indeed, as Stansell herself observes, the moderns often had more in common with the Victorians than they were willing to admit. Goldman's allegiance to the Victorian enterprise of self-culture, along with her old-fashioned faith in the power of the word, energized her extraordinary lectures and sustained her infectious passion for public controversy. She and her bohemian contemporaries still tended to view culture as uplift (albeit toward revolutionary ends), and they recoiled from the vulgar entertainments of ordinary folk.

But if Stansell accepts too quickly the familiar picture of honest young moderns assaulting the hypocritical fathers, she is very good at re-configuring another primal scene of rebellion: the move from the provinces to the big city, made famous by Theodore Dreiser and other young hayseeds in flight from the supposed idiocy of rural life. The typical bohemians, according to the journalist Hutchins Hapgood, were "bored with some small place in the Middle West ... filled with restless ambition to lead their own lives." Stansell complicates this cliché, pointing out that many small places in the Middle West were not as constricting as Hapgood imagined. They had their own bohemian tea rooms and literary salons, where earnest young idealists discussed the latest advanced ideas in socialism, syndicalism, and sexual freedom. Places such as Davenport, Iowa, where the cultural critic Floyd Dell was raised, possessed their own "serious and varied culture," as Stansell points out. They were not mere provincial backwaters.

COURTESY METROPOLITAN BOOKS

Emma Goldman addressing a rally, Union Square, 1916

And yet there was undeniably something different about the city, and about New York in particular. It was not just the saloons and the intense conversations, the noise and the clutter and the critical mass of energy. It was something else, something that Bourne called "Trans-national America." New York was full of immigrants—Irish and Italians and especially Russian and East European Jews. The Village bohemians created a cultural space in which WASP anti-Semitism moderated into tolerance and eventually into the affirmation of otherness.

Outsiders became insiders. In the bohemian imagination, Jews were gradually transformed from picturesque dreamers to admirable comrades and ultimately to embodiments of the vitality that avant-garde intellectuals feared was lacking in themselves. Of the Russian Jews in a novel by Anna Strunsky Walling, Max Eastman wrote: "They burn with hot fire. Their being is self-justified. They live and are sources of life.... As for me, I loaf, and smoulder, and dodge life, and tinker with trivialities." This sort of outburst recalls similar laments from earlier generations: Jane Addams and Henry Adams (among others) were equally frustrated by their feelings of isolation from direct experience. And it links Eastman and his contemporaries with an American modernist reflex that Christopher Lasch aptly named "the anti-intellectualism of the intellectuals."

Anti-intellectual reverence for "life" was by no means confined to American modernists. Oswald Spengler envied "everyone who *lives*," by which he meant everyone who experienced life directly and unself-consciously. Unlike the truly alive, he complained, "I have only brooded, and whenever I was really offered the possibility of living I drew back and let it pass, only to regret it bitterly as soon as it was too late." Such sentiments, combined with cultural pessimism and anti-Semitism, provided a breeding ground for Nazi ideology; Spengler's broodings, like Ezra Pound's or Filippo Marinetti's, revealed how modernism could slide into fascism.

THE OPENNESS AND the optimism of the American modernists kept that dark transformation from occurring on this side of the Atlantic. Here the recoil against Victorian moralism meant that magazines such as *The Masses* would try to become (in Stansell's words) "a collage of offerings rather than a lecture." Unlike the affluent educated professionals who read the fledgling *New Republic*, *The Masses*' audience was composed of ambitious working people—upwardly mobile, self-taught shopkeepers and immigrants. "Labor people came to it," recalled the feminist Mary Heaton Vorse, "people who were interested in life."

The fascination with "life" took more benign turns when it was combined with the conviction articulated by William James that "real culture lives by sympathies and admirations, not by dislikes and disdains." James was onto something. Yet how could artists vivify culture with "sympathies and admirations" if they felt out of step with their place and time? The classic solution was to write or to paint for the ages, to make art that was rooted in particular social circumstances (as all art is) but that somehow transcended the conditions of its creation, using historically specific idioms to address universal concerns.

The Village bohemians, by contrast, felt no need to transcend their moment and their milieu. The culture that they aimed to create was dependent on their belief

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in the promise of modern American life, as it seemed to be surfacing in the streets around them. The young critic Kenneth Burke put their faith dogmatically: "The artist does not run counter to his age; rather, he refines the propensities of his age, formulating their aesthetic equivalents." This formula worked well if the artist believed that he was on the cutting edge of revolutionary progress, but it broke down when "the propensities of his age" were not so hopeful. Stansell elucidates the problem in her discussion of John Reed. His *Insurgent Mexico*, which appeared in 1914, presented a struggle for power that was sanitized, romanticized, and for men only; it was a tourist's account of revolution, "spiced up with a liberal interpretation of peasant wrongs" and calculated to appeal to elite readers such as Reed's Harvard classmate Walter Lippmann, who praised the book effusively from his perch at *The New Republic*. Yet when Reed tried to report on World War I, Stansell observes, "he was unable to use the usual tricks to transform intractably brutal material."

What Burke and other Village optimists failed to confront was the possibility that history had no clear direction—that even the noblest intentions could be thwarted from within, that even the ablest mind could be divided against itself. As Stansell says, the American modernists radiated "confidence, discovery, self-delight"; and had little use for "fine distinctions, irony, and refusal." Which is to say, they had no tragic sense. This was what separated the pre-war American modernists from the most profound of their European contemporaries, as well as from the best of their American predecessors and successors. The difference may help to explain why Melville, Hemingway, and Faulkner acquired an international reading public, and figures such as Eastman and Hapgood continue to seem provincial.

THIS AMERICAN OPTIMISM was nowhere clearer than in the bohemians' effort to join personal revolution to political revolution. Emma Goldman's career epitomized the endeavor. In Stansell's words, she was "the oracle pointing in the direction of untested possibilities," addressing herself to anyone on the verge of departing one situation—"a marriage, a job, an identity, a town"—to try out a new one. A nice Jewish girl from Rochester, she had an Emersonian and evangelical style that spoke more of the chautauqua than the *shtetl*. Under Goldman's influence, anarchism acquired an American cast, re-focusing its energies from collective identity to individual self-expression, and attracting many young recruits away from the plodding pre-

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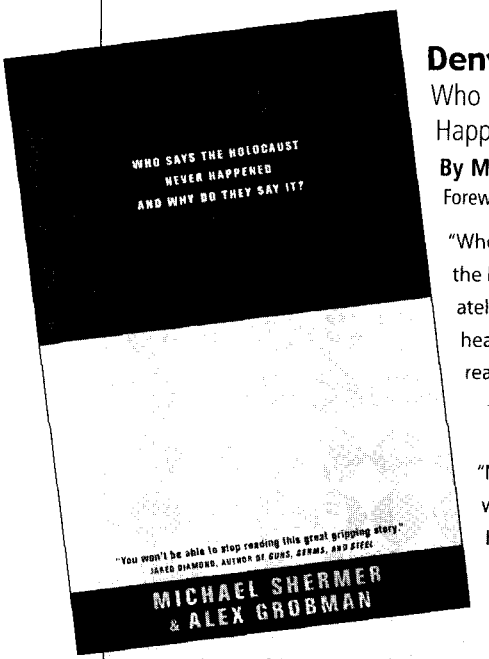
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dictabilities of socialism. As Margaret Anderson said, socialism was merely "an explanation," but anarchism was "an announcement." The former had the aura of bureaucratic rationality, the latter had the lure of high drama.

The effort to infuse politics with personal drama reveals many weaknesses in retrospect, as Stansell acknowledges. Consider Mabel Dodge's salon, where young radicals flocked to feel the energy of Big Bill Haywood, head of the Industrial Workers of the World and an icon of labor authenticity: this may have been the birthplace of radical chic. Or consider the appeal of Goldman herself, whose electric presence (as Stansell perceptively observes) allowed Dodge to put herself into "imaginative proximity with blood in the streets." Occasionally that imaginative exercise promoted the stupid romanticizing of revolutionary violence that would haunt the more dogmatic precincts of the American Left.

But only occasionally. A more common difficulty with bohemian politics was subtler and less drastic. Just as the boring old socialists had warned, the attempt to make public life into a vehicle for private transformation often ended by severing cultural change from political change, free speech from class struggle. The cause of free speech attracted many liberal fellow-travellers to radical causes, but the stakes were higher for the radicals than for the liberals. Goldman's lectures drew vigilantes who vowed that "we will strip her naked; we will tear out her guts." For her, free speech involved a guarantee of physical safety; for most liberals, it was a question of unencumbered cultural consumption, and freedom from the censorship imposed by cloddish ordinary folk—"ignorant postal clerks, clergymen of archaic convictions, and lower-court judges of the tobacco-chewing, common-saloon type," as the *Little Review* characterized its opponents in the censorship fight. As Stansell concludes, "the bohemians laid the groundwork for a liberal metropolitan elite committed as much to matters of cultural taste and innovation as to social reform." Thus the split that so often surfaces in contemporary politics, between permissive elites and repressive masses, can be traced to the turn of the century.

Even as bohemian politics became tinged with avant-garde snobbery, the Villagers' obsession with "vital contact" threatened to transform public debate into therapeutic soul-searching. Stansell recognizes this possibility, but she effectively defends the bohemians against charges of self-absorption. Ever since Byron set sail for Missolonghi, the politics of solidarity has always involved a certain amount of self-valorization. Who can blame the bohemians, Stansell asks, for wanting "a vivid, neo-Romantic life, risktaking, adventurous, open to multitudinous human connections," and for finding that life in the working class fight for economic justice? To be sure, cross-class alliances could sometimes involve little more than lachrymose empathy for the downtrodden, but they could also create something more: "exchanges between writers, lawyers, and poor people all laid out the terms for a powerful twentieth century coalition politics of the left, even if that politics has now all but disappeared."

Here as elsewhere, Stansell implicitly acknowledges what she is up against. We have become so benumbed by the colossal failures of the Left, so inured to the endless media caricatures of countercultural politics, that it is difficult to credit the prewar radicals' hopes. Yet there was (and there is) no reason why personal politics had to become "merely personal," as so many critics have charged. Indeed, that "merely" suggests how commonly conventional politics have served as a refuge from the terrors of the inner life. There was no reason—at least in principle—why inner life and outer life could not cohere, no reason why democratic political beliefs could not also result in democratic personal relations.

Randolph Bourne, c. 1916

That was the hope that inspired the bohemians' most daring departures from Victorian norms. "Sexual modernism" was a set of values that have since become therapeutic platitudes: the rejection of possessiveness and jealousy in erotic relationships; the recognition, indeed the celebration, of female sexual desire; the re-founding of marriage on the basis of "truth-telling and equality" rather than religious ritual; the insistence on openness and honesty between partners in all matters, including extramarital affairs; the ideal of marriage as intense companionship, involving shared work and play both inside and outside the home. Taken together, Stansell suggests, these ideas constituted nothing less than "the invention of heterosexuality"—not as a biological fact, of course, but as an extraordinarily demanding discourse of intimacy, a set of expectations that have survived, in diluted form, down to our own time.

Yet the undiluted version was deeply problematic, particularly when it came to sanctioning promiscuity. Stansell is at her best in showing shrewdly how the brave new creed cracked and crumbled (if it did not dissolve) under the strain of actual experience. The marriage of Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce offers her most telling example. Both were writers; both claimed allegiance to the ideals of free love. But Hapgood was the more established of the two, and his journalistic assignments took him among the working class, where he quickly began exploring the sexual subtext of "vital contact." In letters home he detailed his affairs to his wife, assuring her of the benefits for the marriage of his "meeting and knowing other women." He specialized, as Stansell wryly notes, in "turning adultery into a feminist gesture."

Boyce tried gamely to keep up, professionally and sexually. She had an occasional affair, but she was never as excited by disclosing them as her husband appears to have been, and she never really reconciled herself to his compulsive copulating. Meanwhile she bore him four children, who left her little time to write; servants were in ever shorter supply, and the burdens of domesticity were increasing just as feminists began rejecting domesticity in favor of work in the world. In bohemian circles, child-rearing provided no sense of social worth. Then as now, children were a problem for women with ambition. Male "feminists," despite their proclaimed commitments to shared child care, always seemed to have too many pre-existing professional commitments to shoulder any substantial part of the domestic burden. This was certainly the case with Hapgood, who becomes an increasingly repellent character as his story unfolds. He ends in bathetic self-

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ennoblement, composing a book called *The Story of a Lover*, a litany of complaint about the psychic wounds supposedly inflicted on him by Boyce.

For women, then, bohemian ideology created as many problems as it solved. There was, as Stansell observes, a "willed equality" in sexual modernism; it offered women a seductive model of sexual agency that left them little room to address their actual needs and difficulties. Their sexual desires were celebrated, but their other desires—for loyalty, respect, encouragement, companionate parenthood—were ignored. The noble dream of a gentler masculinity became little more than "a liberal version of swagger, reworking feminist ideals and fantasies of a sexually egalitarian life into a different set of male imperatives." Ironically, Stansell concludes, the American moderns produced "a distinctly modern relationship, in which an outward show of equality obscured a deeper reconfiguration of male privilege and female acquiescence." This was not the modernity that the feminists had fondly imagined.

If bohemian marriage displayed the limits of the ideology of modern love, the coming of World War I revealed the weaknesses in the marriage of culture and politics. The ideals of free speech were put under intense strain, and soon collapsed altogether in liberal circles. John Dewey, who is periodically exhumed and re-canonized by liberals in search of a usable past, remained silent about the suppression of civil liberties—even on his own campus at Columbia, where several pacifist professors were fired. Goldman and other anti-war radicals were imprisoned and eventually deported, but not before she had made a rousing defense of her patriotism to a jury of middle-class businessmen: "I for one cannot believe that love of one's country must needs consist in blindness to its social faults, in deafness to its social discords, in inarticulation of its social wrongs."

Nobody was interested in making such distinctions. War fever brought the death of ambiguity, which had been the fountainhead of bohemians' hopes for a new cultural space, a new "Trans-National America." And perhaps the person best positioned to write the obituary was Randolph Bourne—the intense romantic idealist, the passionate believer in the regenerative power of friendship, youth, and life. All the bohemian dreams were distilled to their essence in Bourne. Yet his deformed face and figure kept him largely on the sidelines of the sexual circus. Yearning for intimacy, he also recognized the pitfalls of a politics based solely on enhancing it. Stansell persuasively argues that Bourne was one of the only bohemians to recognize the dilemma of cultural politics: "if a modern cultural politics of the left could lay the basis for a particular democracy, it might also come to serve as a substitute for that democracy, a substitute that lacked the strength to withstand political reprisals."

A graduate of Columbia, a devotee of Dewey, Bourne made his way as a freelancer, trying with only limited success to sustain working relationships with *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Republic*, finding a home eventually at the upstart *Seven Arts*. When Dewey defended America's entry into the war, Bourne was incensed at what he believed was a betrayal of pragmatism. The man whose philosophy was supposed to provide us unprecedented power to intervene intelligently in the course of history was instead preaching "adjustment" to "the logic of events." Bourne traced this reversal to certain key weaknesses in the pragmatic attitude itself. "If your ideal is to be adjustment to the situation, in radiant co-operation with reality, then your success is likely to be just that and no more," he memorably declared. "You never transcend anything."

Dewey's acquiescence in the war was only a symptom of its larger impact on "responsible" intellectuals. "Their thought becomes little more than a description and justification of what is going on," said Bourne. They had all embraced "realism." "This realistic boast is so loud and sonorous that one wonders whether realism is always a stern and intelligent grappling with realities. May it not be sometimes a mere surrender to the actual, an abdication of the ideal through a sheer fatigue from intellectual suspense?" he asked. The bohemian quest for contact with "real life" had become the liberal intellectuals' capitulation to the realities of the war.

Bourne was damned if he was going to surrender to the actual or abdicate the ideal. His anti-war writings made him a target of the newly created F.B.I. Even on summer outings to the Connecticut shore he was followed by government agents, whom he believed had been put on his trail by Dewey. Penniless, isolated, hounded by spies, he died a victim of the influenza epidemic in 1918. Even in his desperate last months, he still wore his trademark black cape, transforming his deformity into mystery, living poor with style to the end.

One wonders what Bourne would have made of the assimilated bohemian ideals in the consumer culture of the 1920s—a period when, as Malcolm Cowley wrote, "*self-expression* and *paganism* encouraged a demand for all sorts of

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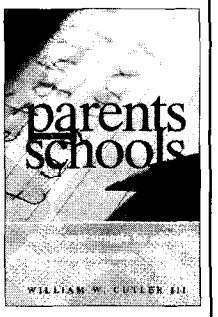

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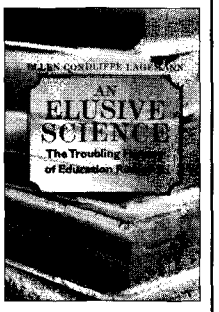

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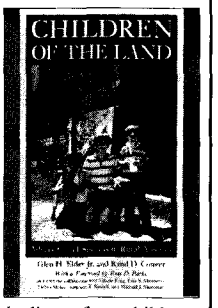

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products—modern furniture, beach pajamas, cosmetics, colored bathrooms with toilet paper to match." Probably Bourne would have reminded his readers of the larger, mostly lost meanings of bohemia, which he embodied, as Stansell writes, in "his respect for culture and the needs of the imagination, his refusal to subordinate the individual to the state, his emphasis on economic co-operation and a disbelief in liberal guarantees of rights as ends in themselves."

Bourne epitomized the enduring aspects of the bohemian ideal. Whether they have endured to our own time is an open question. According to Stansell, Bourne himself believed that "America, for all its fits and starts of memory, never quite forgets those who hold the country to its grandest, most encompassing possibilities." Maybe. But as Hemingway's Jake Barnes remarked a few years after Bourne's death, isn't it pretty to think so? ■

Let Them Talk

By RICHARD A. POSNER

Troubling Confessions: Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature by Peter Brooks

(University of Chicago Press, 207 pp., $24)

CONFESSION, THE acknowledgment of guilt, is a practice encouraged by police, priests, psychoanalysts, talk-show hosts, and the critics of President Clinton. Peter Brooks hopes by looking across the full range of the practice to increase our understanding of it. His emphasis is on the use of confessions in modern American courts to establish criminal guilt. Even when not procured by gross forms of coercion (which the law forbids), confessions sometimes are false—as in the Salem witch trials and their modern counterpart, the "recovered memory" prosecutions of alleged child abusers—and thus, being devastating evidence of guilt, lead to the conviction of the innocent. And even when true, Brooks continues, the confession signifies a "tyranny of transparency" that implies "the abolition of all zones of privacy around the individual, the claim that the individual's conscience must be legible to all, that there can be no zones of obscurity." The use of the confession by the criminal law is thus problematic—and yet confessions are too useful a tool of criminal justice to give up. All that Brooks will recommend is "greater skepticism about their reliability, and a reduced dependency on their role in crime detection."

Brooks is not a lawyer, but he handles legal materials with aplomb, and he writes with equal authority about the other domains of human activity in which the confession figures largely. His range is impressive. One might have wished, if only to give him a slightly larger audience, that Brooks wore his learning a little more lightly, sparing us reference to "speech acts" (a term used obsessively in the book) and Russian formalism and Emile Benveniste's reflections on "language in the situation of discourse," and also such sentences as "He effectively evacuates the issue of 'voluntariness' in our usual acceptation of the term." But these blemishes are rare; the book is for the most part entirely lucid.

Brooks's tone is judicious throughout. It is hard to quarrel with so mild a recommendation as that we be properly skeptical of the reliability of confessions, and that we avoid overdependence on the confession as a tool for convicting criminals, which is all, really, that Brooks—who eschews any intention of "formulat[ing] policy recommendations in the field of criminal justice"—is urging. But let me try. There are two separate issues. The first is the reliability of confessions, and the second is the undesirability of creating a confessional culture (Brooks's "tyranny of transparency").

About the first, Brooks presents no evidence that a significant number of people are being convicted on the basis of false confessions. The "recovered memory" issue is special, because it involves confessions to "crimes" committed many years earlier. The unreliability of distant memory is not an issue in any other class of confessions. Although Brooks is right to point out the subtle and not-so-subtle methods by which the police induce suspects to confess, he presents no evidence that any of these methods is close enough to the rack to induce people to confess to crimes they have not committed.

The more interesting question is whether, even though confessions are reliable evidence of guilt, we should be uneasy about them because extracting from the criminal's own mouth the evidence used to convict him is morally distasteful. There are two closely related points here. First, since confessing to a crime is a self-destructive act, there is a suspicion that confessions, even when truthful, are not voluntary; that the state in accepting the confession is not treating the suspect as an autonomous human being. Second, the use of confessions encourages what is already a cultural drift toward making our inner selves public, and this is also inconsistent with autonomy, and conceivably with liberty and creativity as well. If we are transparent to each other, we become like the cells of a single organism; we have no private space for making our own plans and charting our own destinies.

IT IS IN relation to these points that the role of the confession in domains other than the law becomes important for Brooks. The confession has an important place in religious practice, notably in Roman Catholicism; but there it is rewarded by absolution, whereas confession of crime is "rewarded" by conviction. The same reward structure as in the religious case obtains when the psychoanalytic patient bares all to his analyst, or the talk-show guest to his host and the audience. "Everything in the culture," Brooks observes, "presses toward speech." He is concerned that suspects questioned by the police feel this cultural pressure to speak, not fully realizing that there will be no absolution, but only punishment. So the decision to confess is less than fully voluntary; and, by the same token, people lose the sense that they have a right to keep their thoughts private.

It will help in evaluating these claims to consider more carefully why people ever do confess to misconduct. The answer in the case of the Catholic confessional is simple. The church offers its members an attractive deal: confess and be forgiven for thoughts or conduct that might otherwise be punished with damnation. Notice that the priest's interrogation, unlike a police interrogation, is not part of an investigation designed to discover crime or to obtain evidence against the criminal. Everything to which the parishioner

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might confess is known already, to God. The function of confession is to encourage self-awareness and the submission of the parishioner to the Church. I see little analogy to confessions in the criminal justice system, and therefore I question Brooks's claim that the law "relies upon the model" of religious confession, pressing it to "a somewhat perverse result: conviction rather than absolution." The result is perverse only if the Catholic practice of confession is treated as the standard.

I question also the analogy that Brooks draws between the criminal's confession to the police and the analysand's baring all to his analyst: this is part of a therapy from which the patient hopes to benefit, and anyway what is "confessed" is rarely criminal. The better analogy is to baring all on the talk shows in which ordinary people are encouraged to reveal intimate aspects of their private lives. Brooks is right, I think, to see in this curious exhibitionism a mixture of narcissism and self-justification. These are closely connected. We love ourselves and we think that others would love us if only they knew us as well as we do, and we get them to know us by exhibiting the contents of our minds.

A RATIONAL PERSON, of course, will weigh these benefits against the costs; and when baring all involves admitting having committed a crime, the costs will ordinarily preponderate. But consider now who confesses. It is not (barring torture) the likes of Alger Hiss, O.J. Simpson, Claus von Bülow, or John Gotti—intelligent, and more or less sane, criminals. The suspects who confess are almost always of low IQ, uneducated, unsophisticated, and mentally unbalanced. They are not adept at weighing benefits and costs. They may think that the jig is up—that the police have plenty of other evidence and that therefore they might as well come clean and be rewarded for their cooperation with a dollop of leniency when it comes to sentencing. They may enjoy having a rare opportunity of speaking to an attentive audience (their police interrogators). And they may think that by explaining their crime from their own perspective they may convince the police that there were extenuating circumstances: *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*. No person is a villain in his own eyes, so a confession is bound to have a self-justifying aspect. Some confessions are motivated by guilt and remorse, some even by pride. Police interrogators play on all these various susceptibilities, and the more susceptible the suspect, the likelier he is to confess.

This pattern disturbs Brooks. It seems to him inconsistent with the idea of man as a rational, autonomous being. He says correctly that "confessions rarely are products of a free and rational will. They arise in situations of constraint, whether physical or psychological." From this he infers that confessions "violate our sense that individuals before the law, even as criminal suspects, must be conceived as autonomous human subjects." But unless one believes in "free will" in a literal sense, and Brooks gives no hint that he does, that is true of everything that people do. All our choices are determined by incentives and constraints.

The psychology of confession is not sharply different from the psychology of shopping. Both activities are dominated by incentives and constraints. If confessions are not the product of a free and rational will, neither is the purchase of jelly doughnuts. Granted, this is as true if you are tortured on the rack until you confess, or if you are forced to buy the doughnut at gunpoint. In either case, you weigh the benefits against the costs of resistance, and the balance favors submission. Extortion and other modes of coercion are not forbidden because they interfere with the exercise of free will; they are forbidden because they interfere with consumer choice in the case of the coerced doughnut purchase and produce unreliable confessions in the case of the rack and (to a lesser extent) the third degree.

The Supreme Court has confused the issue in the cases that Brooks discusses by holding that confessions are inadmissible as evidence if they are "involuntary" even if they are reliable. The highfalutin' language of free will that ornaments the Court's opinions has persuaded Brooks that confessions really are morally problematic, since, despite what the Court says, the unsophisticated suspect subjected to police questioning in a jailhouse setting may have little real choice but to confess. But by the same token, if I am asked what two plus two is, I have little choice but to answer four. I can say something else, if I want, but my real answer, the answer I believe to be true, is compelled. And likewise a high-school student offered a full scholarship to Harvard and no financial assistance at Podunk Community College has no real choice but to accept Harvard's offer. Yet we would not say that he was not an autonomous human being, though he is "pressured" by the scholarship offer to bow to Harvard's wishes just as the criminal suspect is pressured by remorse or hope of lenity or sheer despair to fess up. We may think the criminal more likely to repent his choice than the student; but we regret many of the choices that we make without deeming them coerced.

It is true that there is an unattractive

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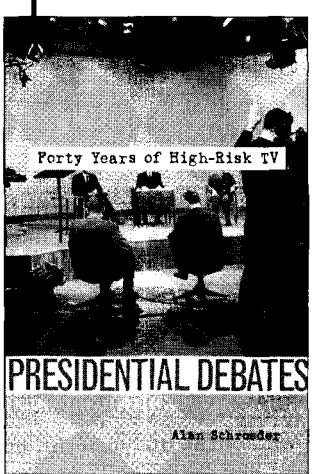

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abjectness to some confessing, what Brooks nicely terms "Dostoevskian groveling in the interrogation room." This certainly distinguishes confessing from shopping. But for examples Brooks has to go far afield—not only to Dostoevsky's novels, but to witch trials and "recovered memory" prosecutions. And, those pathological examples to one side, what from one angle looks like groveling from another angle looks like acknowledging responsibility for one's acts—and thus asserting rather than denying one's agency, one's autonomy. Sentencing judges give credit to defendants who, rather than blaming their upbringing or surroundings for their criminal conduct, take full responsibility—and thus admit that they were "free" to do otherwise. Brooks might think this heaping of blame on oneself abject, but most of us would disagree. Othello is not abject when he confesses to having murdered an innocent Desdemona and kills himself in remorse. And so it is possible to tell as plausible a "free will" story about confessing as about refusing to confess.

I AM NOT convinced that there is a deep tension between confession and autonomy. But it does not follow that police interrogations should be a free-for-all. The Supreme Court's emphasis on voluntariness rather than reliability, and its recent reaffirmation of the duty of police interrogators to give the *Miranda* warnings to suspects questioned in custody, reflects a proper concern with the dignity of the criminal suspect. This concern is not to be confused with taking sides in the philosophers' and theologians' debate over the existence of free will. The Court's point of concern is neither metaphysical nor even moral; it is political. The judges want the suspect to know the score, so that if he does decide to confess, it is his choice; he has not been the victim of threats or tricks. They want this not to celebrate human autonomy, or to give points to Kant or Hume, but because respecting the dignity of the criminal suspect—treating him like an independent human agent rather than like a rattlesnake or a thunderstorm—helps to keep the criminal justice system from turning savage and becoming a danger to law-abiding people. And so we limit the amount of pressure or inducement that can be brought to bear to elicit a confession. Brooks gives us little reason to think that the balance between the interest in dignity and the interest in solving crimes and punishing criminals has been struck in the wrong place.

Americans love to talk about themselves to strangers, and from this fastidious and furtive people such as myself recoil. Yet far from becoming indistinguishable cells in a single organism, Americans are on a rampage of individualism. Talking about oneself can be a form of individualism, of proud self-assertion. Social scientists such as Robert Putnam worry that American society is becoming too atomistic. They call for a restoration of "civil society." They might favor a rule that required a criminal suspect, as a duty of citizenship, to give an account of himself, though not necessarily under oath, rather than to refuse all cooperation in the administration of criminal justice; if he refused, his obduracy could be taken as evidence of guilt.

As this example suggests, the implications of police interrogation for American society as a whole are cloudy. Maybe we should ignore the larger implications. Maybe we should concentrate on making sure that only reliable confessions made "voluntarily," in the loose sense in which the courts use the term, should be usable in evidence against a criminal defendant. Focusing our attention in this way, we may decide that Brooks's fascinating and erudite book is somewhat overwrought. ■

The strange career of ancient magic.

Now, Now, Quickly, Quickly

By PETER GREEN

I.

HALF A CENTURY ago, when I was beginning my doctoral research on the subject at Cambridge, ancient Greek and Roman magic was not the hot academic territory that it has become. True, Jane Harrison had lifted the lid from a good many decidedly bizarre beliefs and practices, but even she was constrained to throw out defensive quotations about "the beastlye devyces of the heathens." James Frazer's golden bough was already in steep academic decline. For most classicists, Greece still epitomized the triumph of reason and humanity over primitive superstition. E. R. Dodds, the controversial Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, had published his groundbreaking book, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, in 1951; but Oxford at that time was by no means the only place where Dodds was regarded as a little odd. ("One hears he dabbles in spiritualism," Denys Page, his Cambridge opposite number, told us, with devastating emphasis.) Odd or not, Dodds, too, felt the need to apologize to traditionalists for "the use which I have made ... of recent anthropological and psychological observations and theories," expecting, as he said, "to be reminded ... that 'the Greeks were not savages.'"

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So there I was, wanting to investigate an underworld that many English professionals in the field felt was best ignored, certainly by hopeful graduate students: a realm of ugly and often illiterate curse tablets, of "voodoo dolls" spiked maliciously through the heart or the head or the genitals, of binding-spells, necromancy, witches, aphrodisiacs, and the collected recipes, preserved on papyrus, of professional magicians. In comparison with these, the literary witches of authors such as Theocritus or Virgil looked pretty tame, though one did get a whiff of the real thing off those horrible graveyard-haunting hags, Canidia and Erictho, pre-

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sented respectively by Horace and Lucan. I was already out of favor with Page, who (to put it kindly) habitually encouraged beginners to break hard ground in areas where he himself contemplated digging. He had generously offered me a couple of Greek anthology poets who just happened to be central to the work he was then doing, and he did not appreciate being turned down.

But I had set my heart on magic, and so I was passed on to W.K.C. Guthrie, the Laurence Professor of Ancient Philosophy, who had imprudently published a monograph on the role of Orpheus in Greek religion, and was therefore held to be a suitable mentor for such disreputable investigations as mine. In fact this change was the biggest piece of luck imaginable for me: to have Guthrie direct my doctoral studies gave me more pleasure, and taught me more, than anything else in my entire academic career. I certainly cannot think of anyone else who could have talked me into reading all thirty-seven books of the Elder Pliny's exhaustive, and exhausting, *Natural History*. But Guthrie was also the great logician who devoted his later years, from about 1960 onward, to writing a monumental *History of Greek Philosophy*. (He was stopped, after six volumes and in the middle of Aristotle, by a debilitating stroke.) Since ancient magic had more than its share of fuzzy thinking as well as obfuscatory abracadabra, our discussions tended to concentrate on establishing clear definitions and a rational methodology. Guthrie abhorred sloppy thinking.

WHY DID SO many recorded spells refer to the sexual organs as the *psyche* (and what difference, we wondered over a glass or two of wine, did this make to the Eros and Psyche myth)? What was the relationship between magic in the Graeco-Roman literary tradition, the Near Eastern rituals of the Persian magi, and the actual day-to-day magical practices revealed by the surviving texts and *materia magica* such as amulets, dolls, and lead curse tablets? To what extent did any of those devices work? Did they owe their alleged efficacy to the psychological manipulation of belief and fear? In the case of love potions (*erotika pharmaka*), was the success of the stuff owed to the presence of genuine aphrodisiac ingredients in the prescriptions? (Mischievous Cambridge gossip soon put it around that I was trying these out on an assortment of female accomplices, or victims, from the women's colleges of Girton and Newnham.) How far, and in what areas, was ancient magic a metaphor—the obvious example being, as Gorgias testified, the spell-binding quality of rhetoric and poetry? Above all, exactly how did magic differ from religion, on the one hand, and from scientific experiment and theorizing on the other?

Here we had to tread carefully. While agreeing that Frazer's notion of magic as the primitive forerunner of religion ran against the evidence, we found a general, but surprisingly unpopular, truth in one fundamental distinction that he made about the ancient world. Mankind was by definition restricted to, and bound by, the observed and normally immutable processes of nature. Exceptions belonged to the heavenly sphere alone: the gods—whose existence, and whose immortality, patently overrode this natural order—enjoyed a monopoly of supernatural power. Their human devotees, who regarded such power with mingled envy and awe, took care to conciliate and propitiate its source in the divine. At best, mortals could petition a deity to short-circuit the laws of nature on their behalf. Frazer's crucial distinction between this sort of attempt to influence the course of the world and any magical activity was that the latter, far from petitioning, sought to coerce. The ancient advocates of magic argued that there were secret keys that facilitated the control and the reversal of the natural order. An individual who could master these keys was in a position to usurp divinity's role, and to manipulate nature for purely personal ends.

Random testing, of which Guthrie and I did a great deal, suggested that this formula—despite its rejection by the academy of our day—made sense in just about every situation that we could adduce from our patchy but highly variegated evidence. It distinguished nicely between prayers and commands. It explained the use, and the manipulation, of *daimones*, the lesser spirits in the heavenly chain of command. It provided a kind of golden bough with which to explore that cloudy region known as theurgy, where control of the supernatural exploited religious sentiment and an assumed intimacy with the highest deities to camouflage its essential nature. When it came to erotic magic, there was a sharp contrast between, say, Sappho's appeal to Aphrodite, which presents itself as a normal bargain-prayer ("I worship you, so please help me"), and the activities of Theocritus's Simaetha, who combines incantations and magical rituals to regain—or, failing that, to destroy—her faithless lover Daphnis.

Thus magic, for its human practitioners, required the study of those arcane secrets that would permit an end-run around the supernatural prerogatives of divinity. Whether its ultimate object was sexual satisfaction, the elimination of a rival, revenge, financial gain, protection, or the cure of illness, in all cases magic, like rape, was essentially about power: the kind of power that could be invoked when all natural resources had failed. It would be hard to imagine a more potent incentive for irrational belief. This sometimes involved really bizarre scenarios. Any punter convinced that, in Aelian's words, "if you throw a wolf's vertebra under a running quadriga [racing chariot] it will suddenly stop as though freeze-dried, when the horses tread on the bone," must have been absolutely desperate to recoup ruinous losses. There was, of course, always some plausible explanation for failure. Maybe one horse failed to make contact? Hence the long and tongue-twisting formulae of magical abracadabra: one wrong syllable would invalidate the entire spell.

II.

IN DUE COURSE I wrote my dissertation on magic in Pliny, after which Tyche (that unpredictable Hellenistic deity: fate, fortune, and the random factor all rolled into one) took a hand in my affairs, and for quite a few years pointed me in altogether different directions. But though I no longer seriously kept up with the subject, I never lost my interest in it; and when I recently returned to a fairly extensive investigation of the field, some of the things that I found there took me aback.

Scholars are normally scrupulous about acknowledging the work of earlier pioneers: the old platitude about dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants, and thereby managing to see a little further, enshrines this attitude. But contemporary American classicists researching ancient magic seem far from eager to recall their predecessors. It has even been suggested that serious work in the field only began in 1991, with the publication of *Magika Hiera*, a volume of essays edited by Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink. Why should a tradition of groundbreaking scholarship dating back as far as Richard Wünsch (1897) and Auguste Audollent (1904) on the curse-tablets, followed by Karl Preisendanz's great edition (1928–1932) of the magical papyri, be damned with faint and infrequent praise?

One obvious reason—confirmed by a perusal of the wide-ranging, well-documented, up-to-date, and for the most part judicious surveys provided by the contributors to *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*—has to be the impact of several varieties of modern social theory on the field, most notably structuralism, feminism, and postcolonialism. If these have anything in common, it is the arrogant conviction that all

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earlier speculation is fit only for the trash-heap. In this volume, despite what looks like an editorial call for clear descriptive surveys, the new "isms" have taken their toll. There is also a good deal of post-Foucauldian prose whinging on about "marginal religious practice, the relation between dominant and dominated discourses, modalities and discontinuities of power," and so on. Worse, if the whole idea of "the primitive" is a self-serving colonial value-judgment, and all systemic world-views are on their own terms viable, then the resultant attitude to the supernatural is liable to end up as a chaotic free-for-all.

As Richard Gordon reminds us, in a subtly hair-raising essay entitled "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," the "naïve essentialism" of such anthropological notions as animism, totemism, or myth has been under attack since about 1970, while magic itself has been increasingly viewed "as a medium for thinking, embedded within a mass of other representations of the world, and on its own premisses unfalsifiable." More recently, both religion and science have been "historicized and relativized." The bottom line is, you must not offend anyone: nobody's ideas, religious beliefs, or even, heaven help us, magical practices are better or worse than anyone else's.

The reason for Frazer's unpopularity begins to reveal itself. A book such as Fritz Graf's *Magic in the Ancient World* (1997), the revised translation of a German version, itself heavily rewritten, of a French original, still ties itself in casuistic knots trying to get round the Frazerian thesis. Illusionists, too, have their place in the parade; and no one who consults a daily horoscope, much less opens a volume such as Desmond Morris's recent *Body Guards*, in which amulets and charms are shown to be still in use around the world (in first-strike countries no less than in third-world countries), will feel inclined to challenge the notion of magic as a "living praxis" today.

Can we exorcize Frazer's ghost, it is asked, "without embracing some more or less objectionable form of cultural relativism"? What price the semantic slide from magic à la David Copperfield to magic as a genuine weapon? How about magic (very trendy, this) as an embodiment of The Other? Where is the dividing line, really, between a doctor's prescription and a witch's magical drug or spell, not least since the same Greek term, *pharmakon*, covers both? While it is certainly true that in Greece and Rome "a whole gamut of representations and claims competed in the marketplace, each with its own agenda," should this in any way modify our interpretative methodology? How, if at all, can we understand, let alone ratify, Gordon's claim that "magic in the Graeco-Roman world became good to think with"?

A lot becomes clearer when we look at the questions that Gordon himself asks:

> Where are we to locate the boundary between the possible, the marvellous, and the sheerly impossible, the fantastic? Between belief and credulousness? How far can we trust common sense? Can people control the inhabitants of the Other World? Can gods will harm? If so, ought they to do so? What are the limits of the power of utterance? Is magical power part of nature, or is it a purely human invention or skill? Where lies the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate use of the Other World?

In other words: rather than examine the ancient world solely on the basis of its own beliefs (which were varied enough), we are now being told to figure all our modern interpretative, moral, even theological assumptions into the equation first. On top of that, we are faced with a series of *parti pris* questions which, by their very nature, admit of no satisfactory answer, and are guaranteed to confuse the issue of Graeco-Roman magic rather than clarify it.

THIS KIND OF screwball thinking partly explains the definitional fog that seems to have re-descended on the study of the subject in the last decade or two, and it is what makes parts of these otherwise rewarding studies such a tough assignment. Ancient magic has many attributes, and we are told about most of them; but an infinity of attributes, as Socrates knew, does not add up to any kind of definition, and they are here further obscured by being so often run into the modern writer's views on magic in general. The result, inevitably, is an *olla podrida* of personal reactions. Thus Gordon regards magic as "a shared construction, a child of the imagination ... the inverse of common sense, a more or less boundless world made possible by cutting the ropes that bind the imagination to the world of hard facts." Daniel Ogden, in a mostly penetrating discussion of binding spells, curse tablets, and voodoo dolls, wonders whether it may not be in ritual that the distinction between religion (community) and magic (the alienated other) really lies. This kind of p.c. thinking is also bound to put a sizable spin on some of the evidence. Christopher Faraone, pursuing in his book the interrelationship of history, gender, and desire (a suspiciously contemporary trinity), comes up with a formula by which male erotic spells are more or less all aimed at forcible sex, whereas their feminine equivalents seek the reinforcement of existing personal relationships. Surprise!

Fortunately, some scholars (notably those with a Germanic or Scandinavian background) have either, like Georg Luck, remained impervious to this kind of thing, or else, like Jens Braarvig and Einar Thomassen, in *The World of Ancient Magic*, have slogged their way through it and come out on the other side. Georg Luck sticks scrupulously to the varieties of ancient attitude. He pinpoints the anti-social, unofficial concept of witchcraft; he also has no qualms about emphasizing the (highly un-p.c.) ways in which one nation could, and did, dismiss the religion of another as "primitive," or "mere superstition." This was often done from an assumption of cultural superiority—thus giving support to Frazer, whose comparative anthropology may have been suspect, but who was a superb classical scholar. But it was also not seldom an instance of the comedy of self-definition. ("I study science, you are a theurgist, he dabbles in magic.") Most useful of all, Luck gives a glossary of key terms (*fascinatio*, *mageia*, etc.) which, as he says, illuminate the way ancient thought and society regarded the magical arts.

Braarvig, in an important essay titled "Magic: Reconsidering the Grand Dichotomy," starts from the general blurring of the difference between magic, religion, and science that the deconstructionist tendencies sketched above have brought about. Have a nice day, have a nice belief. What he perceives, very clearly, is that the unacceptability of bygone "imperialist dichotomies" (say, "primitive" vs. "civilized") does not mean that the dichotomies were, or are, non-existent, much less that their terms have been fixed. If magic is the Other, that Other (as Dodds saw in *The Greeks and the Irrational*) is not necessarily external and foreign. The curse-tablets were in every sense domestic. As Pogo memorably put it, "We have seen the enemy and he is us."

Braarvig's exemplary analysis of *On the Sacred Disease*, the Hippocratic pamphlet about epilepsy which establishes perfectly clear distinctions between magic, on the one hand, and both science and religion, on the other, leads him to a plain, and to me a familiar, conclusion. Not only are the dichotomies a fact, but the contrast between magic and religion is indeed the Frazerian contrast between coercion and submission. The first imposes the magician's will; the second petitions divinity. Similarly, while science can extend our knowledge of the natural world, it is only by means of magic that a mortal aims to short-circuit or to overturn natural laws. Einar Thomassen comes to an

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identical conclusion by a slightly different route, stressing magic as "the appropriation of ritual power for personal ends, offsetting the balance between the individual and the collective which forms the sanctioned norm of ritual practice in societies." Thomassen recognizes that such a formulation makes sense of the absorption by magic of religious ritual (in sacrifice, prayer, hymns, invocations) for its own purposes, these being to empower the individual, to trump nature, and to usurp divine authority. The perception is, precisely, that on which Guthrie and I reached agreement half a century ago.

III.

IT IS CURIOUS that this central fact should have been so fiercely contested, since of course the very nomenclature of one major area of magic is defined by its coercive nature. The Greek binding spell, the *katadesmós*, "ties down" its victim. Its Latin equivalent, the *defixio*, goes further, and implies some kind of actual skewering, such as the thirteen separate spikes that we see piercing the trussed-up body of the Louvre doll reproduced in Daniel Ogden's article. Ogden gives a full and illuminating survey of this nasty little industry.

Over 1600 curse tablets survive, mostly Greek, in the form of thin lead sheets, often pierced with nails. The earliest (ca. 500 BCE) are from Selinos in Sicily, but the vast majority, whether classical, Hellenistic, or Graeco-Roman, are from Attica, with particularly dense clusters in the Agora and Kerameikos quarters of Athens. The litigious nature of fifth-century Athenians immortalized by Aristophanes in *The Wasps* is strikingly confirmed by the curse tablets from the classical period, which are overwhelmingly preoccupied with lawsuits. Trade and theater rivalries appear, but very much as also-rans. By the fourth century, sex moves in and litigation fades out. The social implications are fascinating.

With Rome's imperial domination, curse tablets—especially from the second century CE—spread all round the Mediterranean. Malice no less than trade clearly followed the flag. The style tended towards uniformity; but languages and cults multiplied with syncretic abandon. The cutthroat world of chariot races, with fortunes to be made and lost, generated a new kind of *defixio* that aimed at rival horses and jockeys, with lead-inscribed maledictions sometimes concealed under the starting line. These were especially prevalent in Syria and North Africa. The practice endured at least as long as the Western empire, dying out between the sixth and eighth centuries CE. Reading these scrappy, urgent, vicious texts can be an unnerving experience. "Now, now, quickly, quickly": this is a recurrent hortatory phrase in many of the curses.

Defixio by stabbing is invoked against the tongues of rival orators or lawyers. Nails from crucifixions are credited with special power, and graves were dug up for items from corpses that had died violent deaths. On the sympathetic principle of "like to like" " (*similia similibus*) or "part for whole" (*pars pro toto*), the nail clippings, the cut hair, or even the scraped-off gymnasium sweat of a prospective victim were eagerly sought for ritual incineration. Those who associate sex with death will note without surprise that this was a gambit highly popular in erotic spells, in the first instance to dispose of rival lovers. Indeed, the Louvre doll mentioned above, found in Egypt, in the second and third centuries CE, is of a woman, and the accompanying text shows that it was commissioned by a man determined to get her and to keep her for himself alone ("drag her by her hair, by her guts"). So what are the spikes designed to induce? Desire or pain or both? Is this an early instance of S&M? At least Sarapammon (he has to identify himself if his magic is to work) wants her "for the whole time of my life," which rather militates against the notion that this is magic for one-night stands. It could be argued, indeed, that such "fetching" spells (*agoge*) were the last resort of the clumsy, the ugly, or the shy. The psychology would certainly fit.

It might also explain a very curious discrepancy in the statistics between actual surviving magical texts (whether on tablets or in professional spellbooks) and our fairly copious literary tradition. Though original estimates were exaggerated, it remains true that, whereas the *materia magica* shows men in a clear majority as initiators of maleficent spells, for ancient authors magic was almost exclusively the provenance of women. From Homer's Circe to the Medea of Euripides and Apollonius Rhodius, from Theocritus's Simaetha to Lucan's Erictho, we find a plethora of witches, but not a warlock in sight. As Ogden rightly points out, the nearest we can get to a male wizard is by way of that rather different phenomenon, the shaman: Empedocles of Acragas, Aristeas of Proconnesus, or Epimenides, with their various claims to divinity, magical healing, reincarnation, and raising the dead.

So either we are missing large and significant amounts of evidence, or else—most ancient authors being male—we have a striking psychological projection to explain. The first assumption is not impossible: in the *materia magica* the kind of "fetching spell" represented by the Louvre doll does not occur before the second century CE, whereas literature offers several clear instances of it from a far earlier period, such as the case of Theocritus's Simaetha (third century BCE). But it seems far more likely to me that what we have here is indeed a projection, an interesting blend of fear and wish-fulfillment: at one extreme, terror of the vagina dentata, of the moon-oriented emotional tides of woman as an alien yet potent mystery; and, at the other, the passion that itself begets a desire for passion, the wish that women should find sexual desire as consuming an interest, and preferably in the same way, as men do. Confirmation comes from writers who are on the face of it not interested in magic at all, such as Aristophanes, who takes it as a given that woman's prime urge is for sex and drink. This is at once flattering to the male ego and alarming to male self-confidence. After all, didn't that great transsexual Teiresias reliably report that women get nine times as much pleasure from the act as men?

THUS THE STUDY of ancient magic remains both fascinating and full of pitfalls. It certainly offers unexpected glimpses into areas of human behavior with which our surviving testimony seldom concerns itself in any direct manner. In their various ways, all three of these books offer rich rewards to interested readers. Each is clearly written, full of variegated information, and thoroughly documented. *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* is deliberately designed as an introduction for the general reader, and it fulfills that function admirably. We have already seen some of the material on display here, but there is much more. It is intriguing, for example, to watch what began as the preserve of individual amateurs and local consultants spread, by the time of the Roman empire, into a kind of black-market industry, with professional, even learned, practitioners and internationalized, highly syncretic texts. (Matthew W. Dickie's essay traces this progress with considerable acumen.) The triumph of Christianity added spice to an already rich magical tradition by demonizing pagan religions wholesale, a phenomenon graphically described by Valerie Flint.

Christopher Faraone pushes his modern cultural models a little too hard and forces his ancient testimony somewhat out of shape, but his book does offer a detailed picture of what men—and women—would do in the Graeco-Roman world to snag, or to keep, their Significant Other. I am not convinced by his explanation of Theocritus's amateur magician Simaetha as taking on the role of a stereo-

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typically pushy, that is, pseudo-masculine, courtesan; but he trawls up a wonderfully rich assortment of evidence. I much enjoyed Plutarch's take on the counter-productive effect of using *pharmaka* to beef up one's husband, the long-term effect being to make him stunned, senseless, crippled, and of no service. Bob Dole, please take note.

IN THE LAST resort, though, what really grabs our attention about magic is the central question of its nature. Whatever else may be speculation, the widespread and perennial popularity of this preternatural system of human influence remains an undeniable fact of culture. Nor has its popularity been noticeably dented by advances in science, as a glance at the tabloids makes plain. In Britain, according to Jasper Griffin, a recent poll showed that more people believe in the supernatural than in God. My morning paper in Iowa tells me of an ordained minister convinced that demons can take up residence in the hard drive of a computer. What, in the last resort, accounts for such obstinate and enduring credulity? And when we have eliminated all purely human factors, what, if anything, remains?

The immense driving force of the will to believe, with its almost infinite capacity for suspending if not wholly suppressing rational judgment, has to be the prime cause of all this weirdness. The urgent need to transcend the boundaries of nature is a fundamental human characteristic, and it takes two main forms. You can accept the boundary, and look for a supernatural key with which to circumvent it; or you can assume that the boundary is simply an as-yet-unsolved mystery of the natural order (like, say, DNA), and set yourself to unravel it. On the one side, weather magic and divination; on the other side, long-range forecasting and computerized polls.

There is also the perennial temptation to provide would-be believers with what they want—at a price—by faking the phenomena: hence all the table-tapping, butter-muslin ectoplasm, and Voices From The Other Side. This kind of thing did a brisk trade in antiquity, too. The scientist Hero of Alexandria explained the mechanics of various "miraculous" conjuring tricks (water into wine, and so on) designed to impress the faithful. At the shrines of Lebadea and Thesprotia, fragmentary remains of machinery suggest how the reported "visions" may have been produced. Lucian gives a devastating account of a typical charlatan called Alexander of Abonuteichos, complete with details of how his human-headed snake-puppet was made to do its stuff.

The gray area between science and magic is most easily visualized when we consider ancient medical prescriptions. Again, the word *pharmakon* covers anything from a routine drug to Hermes's moly, or the potent salve that Medea gave Jason to protect him against those fire-breathing brazen bulls: it is not hard to see the way in which the line could be crossed from a rare yet natural root or decoction to a magical substance that actually overrode nature. But beyond such cases there is the magical instrument that is clearly and unambiguously supernatural in its presuppositions: the formula that claims to coerce on behalf of its operator. Into this category fall all the curse tablets, the binding spells, and the amulets.

What was it that maintained so high a percentage of belief, and in what sense, if any, could the formulae be said to "work"? Did any spells bind? Did any amulets protect? For those who employed them, belief surely had to be supported by at least an appearance of more than intermittent success. While it is true that a convenient loophole was provided in the shape of endless errors, verbal and material, that could be made while performing the necessary ritual, this alone would hardly guarantee the kind of widespread popularity apparent from our surviving evidence. There must have been successes.

A modern parallel, again, may help. Millions of people, against all the odds, persist in subscribing to lotteries, in which just enough winners are certified, and publicized, to encourage the rest to persist. So it must have been in the ancient world. Everyone would have known about so-and-so who was miraculously cured of an illness, of the lucky lover whose *agoge* won him his girl for life, of the punter whose *katadesmós* slowed down his enemies' horses and won him a packet, of the injured husband whose rival mysteriously dropped dead. The insatiable will to believe saw to the rest. But we are still left with the problem of explaining even this minority of successes; and when we have exhausted the old trusties—coincidence, autosuggestion, poisoning, aphrodisiacs, and so on—a gritty, uncanny core of inexplicability somehow always remains. That is what makes the subject of magic so magical. The infernal question remains open. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 5

succeeded. But, as a respected national opinion journal, surely TNR has an obligation to be accurate, fair, and evenhanded in its reporting.

JOHN BRAUTIGAM
EVE BEVILACQUA
VIC RUBENSTEIN
Youngstown, Ohio

TO THE EDITORS:

As the urban historian at Youngstown State University and the teacher of a course on the history of organized crime, I must take exception to the recent article by David Grann.

The most significant objection is to Grann's poor research. With his claim that organized crime came to Youngstown in the 1940s because "[the city] had a teeming immigrant population accustomed to arbitrary and violent authority," the author dredges up the old, discarded image that organized crime is a by-product of immigration. The more accepted view is that after the national syndicate was established in 1934, young American gangsters fanned out across the country, bringing local syndicates all over the United States into the national syndicate's domain.

Moreover, in Youngstown there are few signs that public officials "fell in love with the mob." In 1948, Mayor Charles Henderson and his police chief, Edward Allen, launched a six-year campaign called "Smash Racket Rule." While the program was admittedly a mixed success, Allen concluded in *Merchants of Menace* that organized crime survived because it fulfilled the public's demand for illegal goods and services. Most students of this subject agree that organized crime continues to exist nationally for similar reasons.

My other major complaint regarding Grann's article is the misleading facts, not to mention Grann's failure to provide a shred of analysis. In the 1970s, for example, there was no Joey Naples or Lenny Strollo faction in Youngstown; neither became a "made man" until 1988. Until that time, Jimmy Prato was the region's leading underworld figure, followed first by Naples and then by Strollo. Most likely, all were lieutenants in the Pittsburgh crime family. Additionally, contrary to Grann's portrayal, there were few, if any, underworld murders or disappearances in the '80s. Charlie Carabbia was the lone exception. But, with Naples's assassination in 1991 and Strollo's ascension to power, the temper of organized crime changed, climaxing with the attempted assassination of Mahoning County Prosecutor Paul Gains. This was an extraordinary event in the annals of organized crime. When it was founded decades ago,

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the national commission specifically prohibited the assassination of public officials. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that Strollo had become a rogue lieutenant who was so inept at controlling his territory that he had to resort to unprecedented violence. If the FBI had not stepped in, the Pittsburgh family most likely would have removed him.

The attempted assassination of Gains also challenges Grann's conclusion that "the Mafia still held sway over every element of society, from the police to the judges to the politicians." If the underworld had such total control, why did the hit men flee when they learned the police were coming? Furthermore, FBI wiretaps revealed that Strollo was unable to influence Youngstown's police chief, Randall Wellington, because of Wellington's absolute honesty. And Wellington's subsequent appointment as sheriff belies the view that the people of this community "choose to put people in office who are corrupt."

This is not to deny that organized crime and public corruption exist in Mahoning Valley. Undoubtedly they do. But the authorities have responded appropriately and arrested, tried, and convicted those responsible.

FRED W. VIEHE, PH.D.
Associate Professor of History
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, Ohio

DAVID GRANN REPLIES:
John Brautigam, Eve Bevilacqua, and Vic Rubenstein's loyalty to their city is admirable. But their boosterism demands an element of denial, which is one of the reasons Mahoning Valley has not rid itself of the mob. While honorable people have made real strides in improving the area, its blight remains evident to any visitor. A reporter from the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* wrote only a few days after my article appeared: "For more tangible signs of the city's decline, simply walk along the empty downtown streets, past the boarded-up storefronts and the rubble of demolished buildings. Or get in a car and drive past the rusting industrial skeletons lining the banks of the Mahoning River—stark symbols of the valley's failure at economic recovery." The statistics on crime paint an even grimmer picture: during the 1990s, Youngstown had the highest murder rate in Ohio, while the murder rate for black women was the highest in the country. I point out these facts not to disparage the city but simply to give an honest account of the problem.

Fred W. Viehe seems to be almost purposely misreading my article in an attempt to dismiss it. In explaining the mob's emergence in Youngstown, I cite immigration as only one of several causes; others include the economic boom generated by the steel mills, Youngstown's proximity to Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and the pliable nature of police and other law enforcement officers. As for immigration, Viehe's colleague Mark Shutes, an anthropologist who has studied the mob's hold on the region, says, "To understand the tolerance of organized crime [in Youngstown] ... you have to understand the cultural values of the immigrants of that time."

Viehe's other criticisms also seem intended to obfuscate. For instance, I note that Strollo and Naples were aligned with the Pittsburgh Mafia, which they were, not that they were "made" members of the mob in the 1970s. Nor do I say anywhere that there was a rash of murders in the '80s. In fact, I recount that the murders occurred in the '70s and early '80s and then resumed in the '90s. Finally, to say, as I do, that "the Mafia still held sway over every element of society, from the police to the judges to the politicians" does not mean there were no honorable individuals in government or law enforcement. Of course there were, and Randall Wellington was one. But there have recently been convictions of more than 70 county officials, including the sheriff, the outgoing prosecutor, the county engineer, members of the local police force, several defense attorneys, judges, the congressman's top aide, and a former assistant U.S. attorney. Those facts speak for themselves.

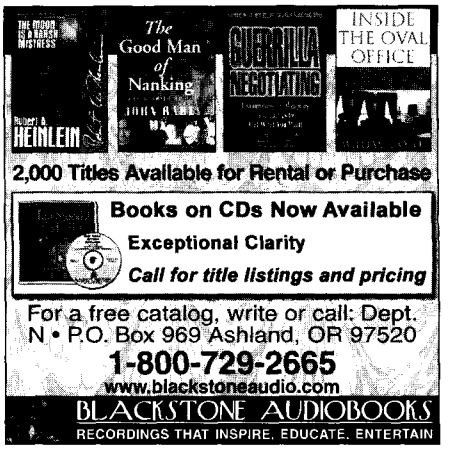
Modification

TO THE EDITORS:
Although "The Big Test" (July 10 & 17) addresses the issue of the consequences, both scientific and political, of mapping the human genome, I found another issue—genetic modification in agriculture—to be greatly neglected by the editors.

The categorization of genetic modification of crops as "relatively unthreatening" is, in my opinion, as uninformed as would be the assessment of "decoding" the human genome as unconditionally good. You remark that the common genetic heritage all humans share is one that should be protected. I wonder how you could overlook agriculture as a key element—perhaps even the foundational element—in that heritage.

Legislation regulating genetically modified crops is finally being introduced here in the United States—far behind the rest of the world. If almost every developed country thinks they are dangerous enough to limit or ban, shouldn't you, and our lawmakers, consider the possibility that they could be something more than "relatively unthreatening"?

JENNY SLOAN
Via the Internet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NEW YORK DIARIST

Openings

NOT SURPRISINGLY, MUCH early press comment on Joseph Lieberman's selection as Al Gore's running mate has centered on what an Orthodox Jew can or can't do in the White House. If the president catches a cold on Saturday, will the vice president be able to faithfully execute his oath of office without compromising his faithfulness to the Supreme Sovereign? Can a commander-in-chief command on Shabbat? The answer is yes—not because Lieberman makes exceptions to the rules but because, under Jewish law, doing whatever it takes to preserve human life, on the Sabbath or any other day, *is the rule.*

NO MERE RITUAL, SABBATH OBSERvance goes to the heart of Judaism. The word "Orthodox" is the nineteenth-century locution for people who refer to one another as *shomer shabbos* ("Sabbath-observing")—the true designation of belonging. To begin at the beginning, the Fourth Commandment reads: "Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy.... Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath (*Shabbat*) of the Lord your God, you shall not do any work...." Of course, an awful lot rests on how you understand "work," and over the centuries the Jewish tradition has labored to define the everyday so as to fashion its opposite, the Sabbath, as a day of rest, prayer, and study, a time out of time in which people can nonetheless live.

THE MISHNA, THE CANONICAL DIGEST of ancient Jewish law compiled in the third century, around which the Talmud later took form, lists 39 categories of forbidden labor and all their subsets. The Sabbath, then, becomes a kind of photo negative of the working world, a sacred inversion of the mundane. Alongside the prohibitions are affirmative acts of sanctification by way of prayer, study, and celebration, reflecting another iteration of the Fourth Commandment, bidding Israel to "remember the Sabbath to make it holy." Taken together, the prohibitions and affirmations yield a day in which everything yields to the obligations of observance and memory.

WELL, ALMOST EVERYTHING. THE Mishna says that if a human life hangs in the balance—and even if there is only a possibility that it might—the Sabbath laws are suspended. From a passage saying that if one is buried under a rock slide on the Sabbath, we should "open (*mefakhin*) the heap of stones above him" to save his life, was born the phrase *pikuah nefesh*, literally "an opening for a life." And an opening in the law. To the rabbis, this concept emerged from reading biblical texts in light of one another, in this case reading the Ten Commandments in light of Leviticus's admonition that the laws of the Torah were given "to live by them." "'To live by them,'" the Talmud says, "and not to die by them." And the Talmud offers an eminently prudential justification for this ruling: "Desecrate one Sabbath for him, so that he may observe many more."

PIKUAH NEFESH, THE OVERWHELMING value of human life, became a controlling principle in the *halakha*, the vast corpus of traditional Jewish law. The great twelfth-century jurist, philosopher, and (not insignificantly) physician Maimonides writes in his code of law: "The Sabbath, like all precepts, is suspended in cases of saving human life.... In sum, with regard to a dangerously ill person, the Sabbath is like a weekday as regards all that is required.... You see, then, that the laws of the Torah are not a vengeance upon the world but mercy and kindness and peace in the world." The still-authoritative code of law called *Shulhan Arukh*, which was composed in the sixteenth century, puts it more starkly: "If one is dangerously ill, it is an affirmative religious obligation (mitzvah) to desecrate the Sabbath for him, to be energetic here is to be praised, and he who tarries with questions is a murderer."

AN AFFIRMATIVE RELIGIOUS OBLIGAtion: This is more than a loophole or an extenuation. The suspension of certain laws in situations of urgent service is an axiom of the legal system itself. One scholar characterizes the matter thus: "As the ethical pressure increases, the ritual pressure decreases." This is not a concession to circumstance; it is, rather, a recognition that morality and ritual are complementary moments in the revelation of God's presence in the world through the things that people do. To be sure, the law is not infinitely malleable on this point: the Talmud famously enjoins that one must willingly surrender one's own life rather than commit the sins of idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder; and over the centuries rabbis and pietists were forced to develop a harrowing jurisprudence of martyrdom. In other words, not everything is more important than human life, but almost everything is. And those limits themselves show just how much the tradition is willing to suspend when life hangs in the balance.

OF COURSE, THE WORKINGS OF GOVernment are not always, or even often, immediate matters of life and death. But Jewish law also includes the concept of "communal needs," *tzarkhei tzibbur*, the classic example being the allocation of charitable community funds. The Talmud seems to have had Capitol Hill in mind when it noted that for this purpose one may go even to "circuses, theaters, and basilicas." Why? The Talmud explains that the commonweal is *heftzei shamayim*, literally "heaven's business." This, too, is not a blanket exemption from the law: this more routine public business can be done on the Sabbath only verbally, not by writing or driving or violating any other prohibition.

FOR PRACTICING JEWS, GOD IS QUITE literally in the details. Yet not every detail can be spelled out. Like all Orthodox Jews working in government—here, in Israel, and elsewhere—Joe Lieberman has had to exercise his own judgment regarding where to draw the lines, and to convey to his colleagues that the odd-seeming rules regulating much of his life are grounded in an abiding moral and spiritual framework. This, too, is not wholly novel. The great historian Jacob Katz demonstrated that the *halakha*, and in particular the law of Shabbat, has long been shaped not only by formal processes of reasoning and interpretation but also by what he called "the ritual instinct"—the moments when the requirements of the law meet the individual's sense of the tradition and the integrated life it is trying to foster. Historically, that instinct came most often into play as people tried to square the sanctified aura of the Sabbath with the imperative to earn a living. Today, that instinct is increasingly taking shape under the different pressure of trying to join with society at large in the shaping of policy and polity, while maintaining one's own identity and integrity as a representative not only of one's democratic constituents but also of a tradition whose most hallowed rituals step aside to save a life or to feed the poor. And the tradition's deepest impulses underwrite, and even welcome, this ardent engagement with the world.

YEHUDAH MIRSKY

YEHUDAH MIRSKY, a former State Department official, is a doctoral student in religion at Harvard University.

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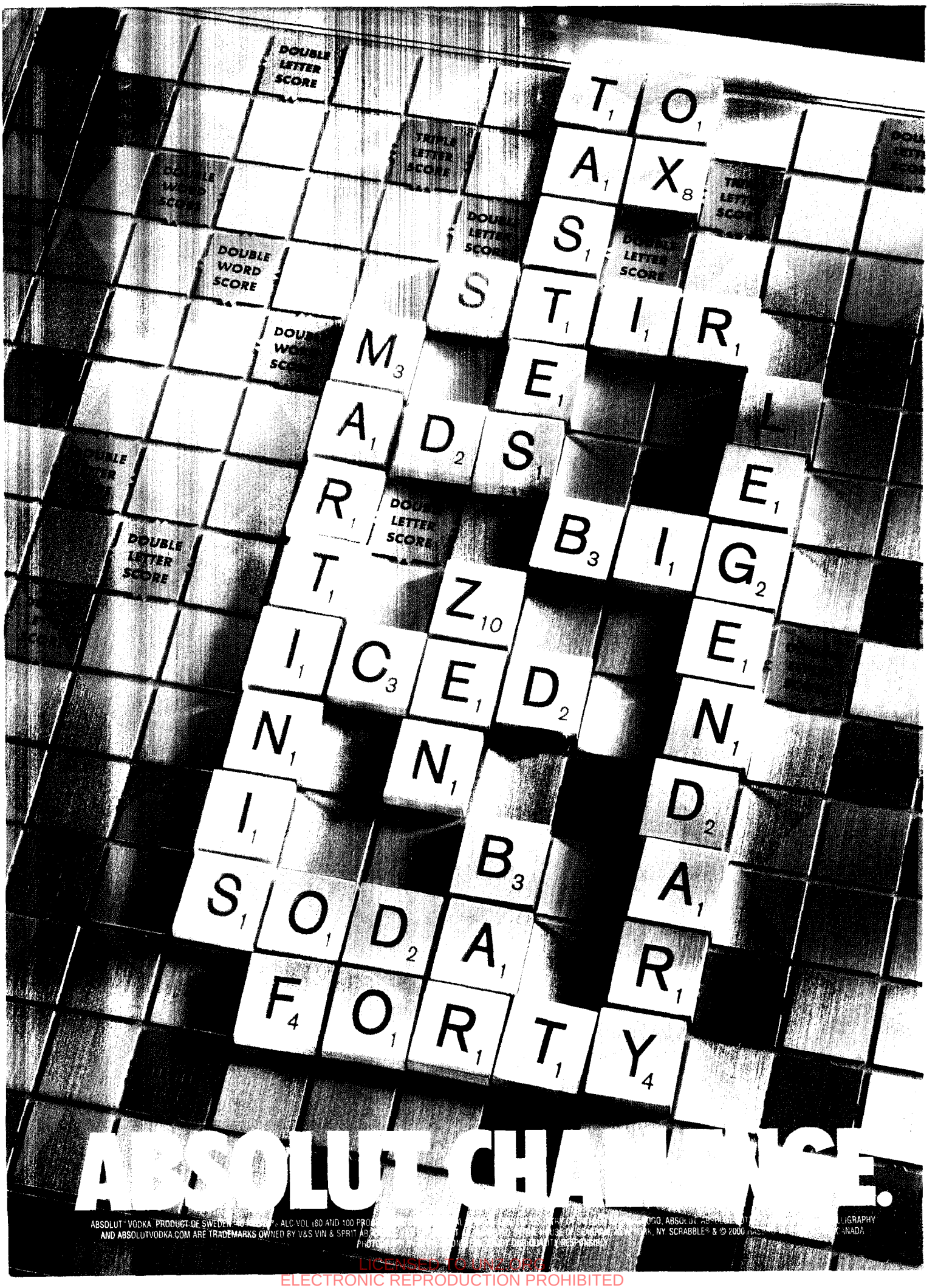

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